

THE BOY BONDSMAN

OR, UNDER THE LASH



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THE BOY BONDSMAN



"The white horse and his riders had swept over the precipice."
[p. 365.]

THE BOY BONDSMAN

OR

UNDER THE LASH


BY

KENT CARR

Author of "Not Out," "Playing the Game," etc.

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY,
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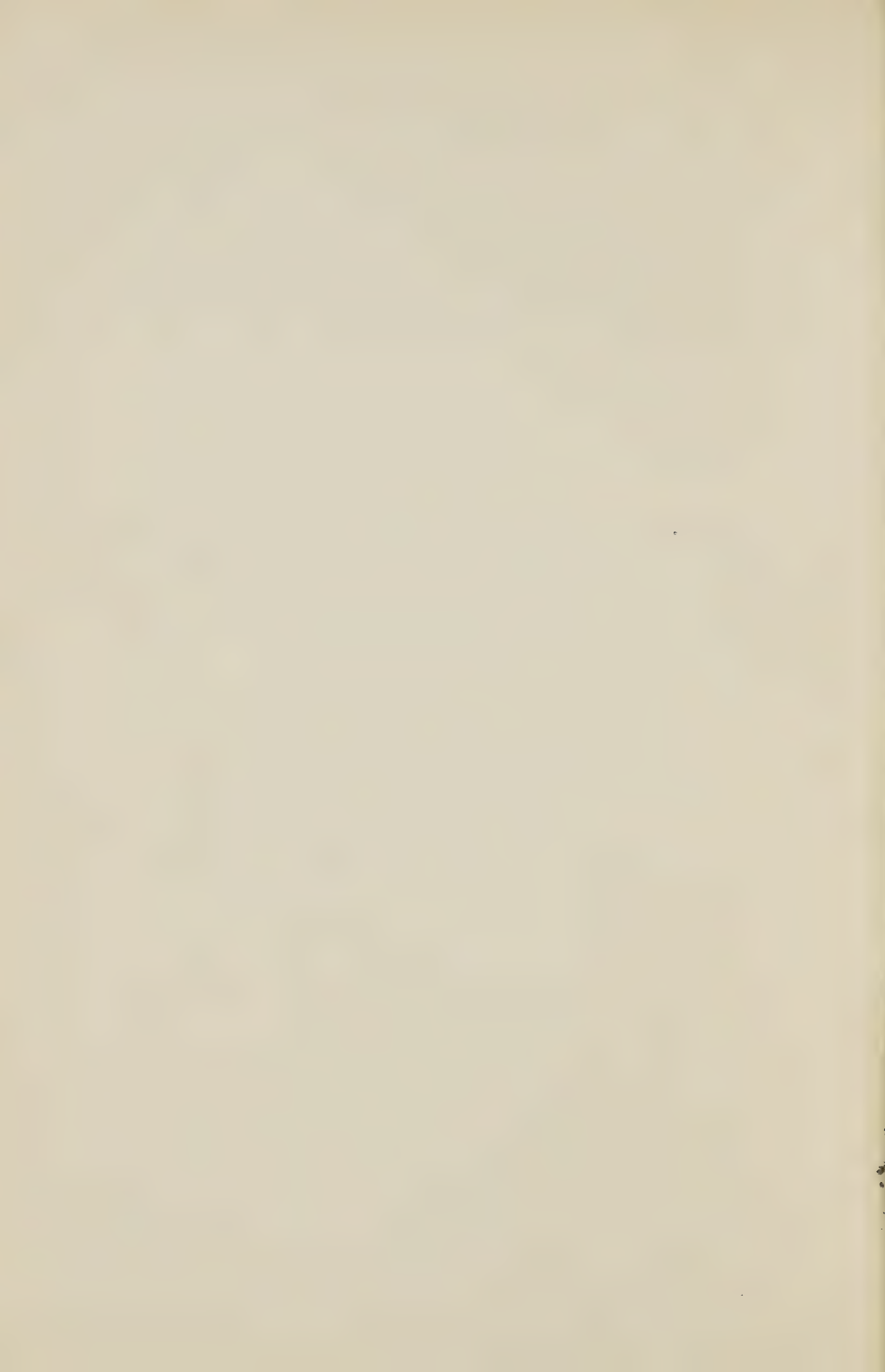
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The Boy Bondsman

CHAPTER I

"THE NEWGATE BIRDS"

On the first day of March, in the year 1718, the ship *Sally*, of London, George Ticklefoot master, sailed into the mouth of the Rappahannoc River. Besides passengers, there were some twenty-five convicts on board.

The convicts were kept between decks. But Captain Ticklefoot, being a humane man, let them up on deck, six at a time, for a short space every day. They had at first been packed as closely as herrings in a barrel. But in the two months that had elapsed since their being shipped aboard, sea-sickness, and typhoid, and the rigours of their confinement had done their work. There was room for them to turn round o' nights now.

The petty officer whose duty it was to cite the names of each fresh batch to be allowed on deck, after their fellows had been safely bestowed under hatches again, kept as far from the opening as he could. The foul and intolerable odours that came up to him from below were sufficient to turn even a strong man squeamish.

"John Bidgood, William Smith, Jane Diggs, Phineas Wormly, Silence Wood,

Anthony Shipley!" he called, and his voice must have sounded like a summons from heaven itself, to the imprisoned beings whom it called to the blessed air and sunlight. But they were too weak to rush forward, crowding and pressing over one another, as they had done at first.

"Stir yourselves! Stir yourselves, ye lazy rogues!" cried the officer harshly.

A group of emaciated beings appeared at the foot of the ladder. Silence Wood, a white-faced drab of a woman, scarcely able to crawl, would have fallen in mounting it, if Anthony Shipley had not put out his hand and steadied her, keeping a helpful hold on her arm until she reached the top. The woman turned and looked at him with a sort of animal wonder in her eyes. It did not occur to her to thank him.

Anthony Shipley was not yet arrived to eighteen years, but he looked already a man. He was in rags, like the rest, but his fair hair was tied in a queue behind, and there was some attempt at order about his person. He was as lean as a greyhound both in face and figure. But the eyes looking out of the lean face were as brightly and coldly blue as a steel blade.

Having reached the space on deck set apart for the convicts, he withdrew a little from the rest, and stood with his hand on the gunwale, taking in his first view of Tide-water Virginia.

It was a majestic prospect on which he gazed. Behind him was Chesapeake Bay, in

its noble stretch more like a river than a bay, which the Indians called the “Mother of Waters.” In front was the stately Rappahannoc, flowing between banks so low that the trees on each side seemed actually growing out of the water.

Suddenly the boy raised his head and snuffed the air like a hound when it first discovers the scent. A strange balsamic odour, breathing the freshness of primeval forests, was being wafted out to him from the shore. Presently others noticed it, too, and crowded to the ship’s side.

“’Tis the scent of the pines, though never have I known the wind carry it so far out as to-day,” he heard the Captain telling the passengers.

There was something of blessing, of healing, of comfort and friendliness almost in its warm fragrance, and Anthony Shipley drank it in in deep breaths. He was too absorbed to hear the note of recall being sounded to his gang.

“Back to kennel, jail-bird!” said the petty officer, hurrying up to him. He was about to emphasize the command with his foot, when his victim faced him with a look which unaccountably made him change his mind.

That was the last time that Anthony Shipley slept in the reeking hold of the *Sally*. The next day they were riding at anchor before Fredericksburg, their destination. Here, Mr. Jeremiah Nepho, the merchant to whom they had been consigned, came on board to inspect his cargo before putting it on the market.

Mr. Nepho was a little weazened man, who looked as though he had spent his life higgling over profits. He was dressed in decent broad-cloth, but made no pretence to being a gentleman. He was a man of substance, but the lordly planters of the Rappahannoc would as soon have thought of making their overseers free of their company as this huckstering merchant, who made a large share of his income out of the African slave-trade. Nor did Mr. Nepho expect it of them. It was an age when rank was very acutely and sharply defined.

When the wretched convicts, in every conceivable stage of rags and misery, were marshalled on deck in front of him, Mr. Nepho drew a long face.

"A sorry lot!" he remarked, after a prolonged and gloomy inspection. Having with the point of his ebony cane, made one of them perform a circle in front of him and dug another in the ribs with the same instrument, apparently with the object of finding out if his looks belied him, and he really did possess an ounce of flesh on his bones, he repeated with emphasis,

"As sorry a lot as ever I saw!"

"Such victuals as the contractors provided were given them fairly, Mr. Nepho," retorted the Captain, a shade of offence in his deep, honest voice. "If the bacon was rusty, and the beef by some mischance left behind, you must shift the blame where it belongs. But I am free to tell you that had I not now and

again clapt them in something from my own stores, you would not see so many of the poor wretches here to-day as you do."

"So many!" repeated Mr. Nepho, bitterly. "Why, a full fifty was consigned to me from London, Captain!"

The other's face sobered. "It hath been a sickly voyage, Mr. Nepho, and that's a fact," he admitted. "After we passed the Scillies the sea ran very high, almost twenty days together, and the ship rolled prodigious. Of course, being squeezed up like that, they was bound to feel it."

"Well, accidents will happen," sighed Mr. Nepho, who knew that, even as things were, he was going to make a pretty penny out of the transaction. "And now, if you'll tell one of your men to handcuff them in pairs, Captain, and let me have a guard of sailors to drive them to the market-place, it's odd if I don't find them masters before candle-light."

The Captain gave both orders, though with a dubious glance at the starveling scarecrows for whose needs Mr. Nepho was so generously providing. "Would you not make your advantage in laying over their sale till they have somewhat mended?" he asked.

"In an ordinary way I should," Mr. Nepho conceded. "But it chanches to be the Monthly Court Day at Fredericksburg, Captain. All the gentry of the Rappahannoc will be there. 'Tis too fair an opportunity to let slip."

"I'll wager you'll see some surly faces when

you appear amongst them with your 'Newgate birds'!" laughed the Captain. "The planters disrelish the thought of these desperate villains being foisted upon them."

"But their honours need hands to plant their tobacco!" said Mr. Nepho, very shrewdly. "And that being the case, with your leave, Captain, I'll risk the surly faces."

But the Captain had been considering. "Seeing that 'tis the Monthly Court Day, I have half a mind to go with you myself," he observed. "I have a score of messages as well as a plenty of presents for the planters, from their kinsfolk at home. Besides, some of them are my very good friends, and I shall be glad to renew my acquaintance with them."

The latter statement was no more than the truth. For in addition to the fact that he was in constant touch with "home" as the Virginians still fondly named the Mother Country, Captain Ticklefoot was, like the rest of his class, a man of wide experience and intelligent conversation. As such, the best quality in Virginia admitted him to a degree of intimacy.

"I shall be honoured in your company, Captain," Mr. Nepho was beginning with a bow, when a slight scuffle among the convicts, and a rapped-out oath from the sailor who was fitting on the handcuffs, aroused their attention. They both instinctively moved forward to see what was amiss.

Anthony Shipley, and a crop-eared convict

with a bullet head, and a cut across his face, had been selected by the sailor to be paired off together. He had briefly told them as much, and ordered them to hold out their hands. The man had scowled, but held out his hand—there was a mark burnt into it that stamped him as one of Newgate’s own—in sullen submission. The boy, his hands at his side, had signified a fierce refusal.

“Why, bless my soul! what’s this?” exclaimed Mr. Nepho. “Disobedience? and from a lad who’s ’scaped the gallows! Put up your wrist, fellow, without more ado!”

He made a motion to tap the said wrist smartly with his ebony cane. But before it could descend the boy had seized it in his hand, broken it as though it had been matchwood, and flung it, silver top and all, over the gunwale, and far out across the waves.

“Bless my soul!” said Mr. Nepho again. “but this is rank insubordination!” He gazed at the place where his property had sunk as though he could not believe his eyes.

“Have done!” said the Captain to the boy himself. He spoke sharply but not altogether unkindly. “There’s every sailor on board the ship to force ye, and the boatswain ready to give ye a round dozen over and above, if I say the word. Have done, lad, and do as you’re bid.”

There was too much rough sense in the words to bear dispute. Anthony Shipley hesitated a moment and then held out a hand almost impassively in the sailor’s direction.

The next moment it was securely fastened to that of the gentleman who bore the Newgate brand, and who jeered at him heartily.

But Mr. Jeremiah Nepho moved forward, a revengeful look in his little narrow eyes.

"Nay, Captain," he objected. "The wanton destruction of a silver-topped cane merits some chastisement, I think."

"Well, a wealed back won't improve the lad's looks nor advance your prospects of selling him neither, Mr. Nepho," observed the Captain with his usual acumen.

Mr. Nepho acquiesced, though regretfully, and turned to superintend the descent of his flock over the sides of the ship and into the small boat waiting to convey them to the landing stage. With their fettered hands they accomplished the feat awkwardly enough.

"Be wary how you tread, you shuffling fools," Mr. Nepho called down to them in an agony of solicitude. "'Twas but a month ago that a boat transporting felons across the Potomac, upset, and the rascals, being unable to swim in their handcuffs, was all drowned."

The effect of this cheerful narrative on the present boat-load was to make them properly careful. Indeed, to such an extent did they carry the wariness Mr. Nepho advocated, that as they climbed the steps of the wharf on the other side the sailors had to encourage them from behind by prodding at them with their hangers.

They stood for a moment, a dreary band

on the bank, watching the servants, black and white, rolling the tobacco down from the great barn-like buildings known as “Rolling Houses.” where the tobacco was stored until it was ready to be shipped to the wharf. Then they were faced about by the sailor in command.

Before them, set round with greenery, lay the town, with its white-washed houses. Further inland and wherever their eye rested they found themselves looking into vast evergreen forests. In the distance the purple shadows of a great mountain melted into lines of purest azure. It was the lovely range known as the Blue Ridge. Across it lay what the Indians called the Great Beyond.

“March!” came the order, and they were taken at a sharp trot along the highway, up the main street of the town and into the market-place.

CHAPTER II

THE MONTHLY COURT DAY

Fredericksburg was the only town deserving the name on the Rappahannoc. The Virginians, as a body, frankly detested towns. Those with whom the decision rested preferred to live in patriarchal state on their plantations, dispensing a royal hospitality and meting out a justice to their dependents, which, if high-handed, was at least what it professed to be.

Mr. Jeremiah Nepho had left his horse on the wharf in charge of a negro. Here the Captain hired one too, and the pair trotted at an easy pace towards the market-place. Their horses were unshod, the soft, sandy road rendering horse-shoes unnecessary. Besides, iron was expensive, even in these prosperous days when Governor Spotswood, whom the Virginians laughingly called the Tubal Cain of Virginia, had opened up undreamt of possibilities in the newly-discovered iron mines.

On their way they were overtaken by a big burly man in homespun clothes and leather breeches, mounted on a powerful bay horse. His face was tanned to the colour of a hickory nut, and looked as hard. This was Mr.

Myron Slaughter, overseer to Madam Rolleston, owner of Pine Mount, one of the oldest and most agreeable, though not one of the richest plantations on the Rappahannoc.

"Well met, Mr. Slaughter!" said the genial Captain, permitting the overseer by a gesture to ride alongside. "And how goes it at Pine Mount with Madam and young master and miss?"

"They have their health, sir," answered the overseer. "I'll make report of your safe arrival to them. And mighty pleased they'll be to hear of it, I know."

"Their welcome will be no less hearty, I take it, friend, because of the modish finery I bring them from the town," laughed the Captain. "Such store of tabby silks, and printed calicoes, and gold and silver lace as never was! And it seems but yesterday I was dangling little miss upon my knee, and choosing her a rag-baby! And now 'tis quilted petticoats, and clocked stockings, and high-heeled shoes!"

"Which she'd change with all her heart for the buckskins Madam will no longer suffer her to ride in, now she's come to fifteen years," declared Mr. Slaughter. If it had not been impossible to suspect that hickory-faced gentleman of anything like softness, one might almost have imagined that he spoke regretfully, and that the picture the words had conjured up in his mind was a pleasing one.

"Fifteen years!" repeated the Captain, astonished. "Egad! but time goes on nimble

heels nowadays. I'll lay young master feels himself a man and would be rid of tutors, if he could."

"He attends the College of William and Mary at Williamsburg, 'long with young Mr. Beverley of the Potomac," said the overseer.

"Of which my good friend Mr. Commissary Blair is President, if I remember rightly," said the Captain. "And do they keep the lads to their books at the College?"

"The young gentlemen manage to find time for their diversions, too, sir!" answered the overseer dryly.

The Captain laughed at his tone. "Well, young blood was ever warm!" he said tolerantly. "And they'd be bold lads who'd try the Commissary too far. He's a proper man to keep young sparks in order, if ever there was one!"

The overseer kept a discreet silence on the point of how far the young gentlemen's diversions were controlled by the masterful Mr. Blair, or rather how many of them they contrived to hide from his penetrating eyes. Mr. Nepho took advantage of the pause to mention the individuals by this time presumably waiting for him in the market-place, to expatiate on their merits and to delicately suggest that Mr. Slaughter should secure some of the prizes for Madam.

The overseer looked dubious. "Madam likes not this traffic in gallows-birds," he said. "But since she will not buy raw Africans, and there is so much new land to

be cleared on the plantation——” he paused, gnawing thoughtfully at his moustache.

“Talking of raw Africans,” observed the Captain, with a sidewise glance at Mr. Nepho, “it is spread abroad in England that Governor Spotswood hath sent a petition to the king in the name of the planters, humbly imploring him to abolish the African trade altogether.”

Mr. Nepho did not look as discomposed as might have been expected.

“His gracious Majesty knows their honours must have hands to plant their tobacco,” he said, placidly repeating the phrase he had made use of with regard to the convicts.

The mention of Governor Spotswood caused the Captain to enquire after his Excellency’s health, and to add,

“With a gentleman of such parts at the head of affairs, it is natural to suppose that the Colony has been in the enjoyment of peace and prosperity since I was here last.”

His hearers turned and looked at him in surprise. “There are some things that are too hard, even for his Excellency,” said the overseer, making the admission grudgingly. “And as for peace and prosperity, Captain, what with Blackbeard on sea, and the Indians on land, if a man can keep his treasure chest safe and his scalp on his head he hath cause to be thankful nowadays.”

It was the Captain’s turn to be surprised. “Indians!” he exclaimed. “Why, I thought

the Governor had got them palisaded up in Meherrin, as tame as robins."

"'Tis not the Meherrin Indians, but the Genitoes," the overseer explained. "Some months ago the Genitoes surprised a party of the Meherrins that had been out hunting, and scalped fifteen of their young men. The Meherrins begged the Governor to go to war with the Genitoes, but though he refused he bestowed on them powder and ball and his blessing, to go and do the job themselves. And ever since then the Genitoes have owed us a grudge, and not a week goes by now, but one hears of a runner or an express scalped, or a border cabin fired."

"But does his Excellency suffer it?" cried the Captain.

"Oh, he has the Rangers scouring the woods day and night, and has twice called a Militia muster to hunt the vermin down," answered the overseer. "But they are hard to come at. 'Tis here to-day and there to-morrow with them. Just a whoop, and the flash of a tomahawk, and the rip of a scalp, and they are off and away, as fleet as elks, to their hunting-grounds beyond the Blue Ridge! As to Blackbeard——"

"But I thought Master Blackbeard had become a reformed character," interrupted the Captain, "and had taken oath to Governor Eden of North Carolina, to have done with pirating and become an honest seaman once again?"

"Why, so he did," returned the overseer in

his dry way. "And Providence saw that he didn't go unrewarded for it, neither. For shortly after taking the oath, what should he light on on the high seas, but a French ship laden with sugar and coffee and cotton, and without a soul aboard her. And him being such a reformed character, Governor Eden swallowed the story and suffered him to enter it at the custom-house!"

"And his Excellency?" enquired the Captain.

"His Excellency set a price of one hundred pounds on his head!" answered the overseer tersely. "And Blackbeard feeling himself clean affronted, has taken to lying in wait in our creeks and rivers for any prey he can catch. To such a pitch has it come that there's not a gentleman can go out for a day's pleasuring on the water, without doubting whether or not he'll be walking the plank before sundown."

At this point in the conversation they had reached the main street of the town leading directly to the market-place. For some minutes before a regular, cracking sound, to which Virginian ears were no stranger on the Monthly Court days, had reached their ears. Getting nearer, the bellowings resolved themselves into the utterances of a human voice ejaculating, "Oh, pray! Oh, pray! Oh, pray! in every note of supplication and distress.

Turning into the market-place without undue curiosity—it was easy to divine what was happening—they saw the constable freeing

a negro from the whipping-post to which he had been tied. The black began to put on the shirt of which he had been stripped, submissively enough.

"Hog-stealing!" said somebody briefly, in answer to the Captain's questions. "He has just had his lashes."

The Captain recognised the negro and drew rein beside him. He had often seen him rowing the barge of young Mr. Fauce of Greenbriars, than whom only his Honour, Mr. Robert Carter of Corotoman—"King" Carter, as he was called—owned a larger plantation on the river.

"Well, Pompey boy, you'll let Massa's hogs alone in future, I reckon," observed the Captain with a twinkle in his eye.

The big tears were running down Pompey's face, but he caught the twinkle, and his fun-loving African nature responded to it on the instant. "I sholy shall, sar!" he declared, and then rolling up the whites of his eyes, added demurely, "So den der'll be more hog for Massa, and less boy!"

"You saucy rascal!" exclaimed the Captain with a flip of his whip that missed, with intention, Pompey's smarting back.

The market-place was peopled with a strangely picturesque crowd. Here were planters who had come in their great coaches, their gorgeous barges, or on their blooded horses, easy, smiling gentlemen, with powdered hair and ruffled coats and commanding, well-bred manners. At a little distance

were such of the frontier men as lived within anything like reach, with their firm, rugged faces and work-worn hands, who had laid down axe and rifle for the time, to come and do their duty as good citizens. Mingling with them were hunters and Indian traders. These were the men of the cool and daring eyes, the fringed hunting-shirt and the long rifle. There were overseers too, in homespun like Mr. Slaughter, who were turning business-like glances in the direction of the convicts who were huddled up like sheep in one corner of the Court-house yard. A few trusted negroes were there, too, on errands for their masters, each with his written pass in his pocket, you may be sure, since if he were found without it no white man there but would have deemed it a neighbourly act to his owner to whip him and send him home. Two or three Indians, striking and majestic figures wrapped in their blankets, stalked among the crowd. But each bore the badge of striped cloth proving him a messenger, without which his temerity in venturing there would have been punished by death. A company of Rangers with a lieutenant at their head gave a pleasing military note to the scene. Not that anything like spectacular display was attempted at Fredericksburg. If you wanted that kind of thing you must go to Williamsburg, the capital, where no less than twenty Guardsmen and an officer were in constant attendance on his Excellency.

But in all the varied crowd you might have

looked in vain for the sight of a petticoat. The Monthly Court day was a political and not a social function, and as such pertained to men alone, their heads, as their owners openly affirmed, being stronger than those of women. The Virginian lady did not dispute the point. Elegant hostess, busy mother of a family, universal organiser of many servants as she was, she was probably too busy. Certainly her presence would have acted as a check on the licence into which the grave formality of the earlier part of the day invariably degenerated, since in no place in the world has woman ever been treated with a more chivalrous respect and devotion than in the Old Dominion.

Quite close to the Court-house—so close that Anthony Shipley, standing among the rest of the convicts in the Court-house yard could have touched them with his hand—were the stocks, whose presence there was enjoined by law. For a wonder they were unoccupied to-day. The same could not be said for the pillory, which was ornamented by a gaunt, raw-boned face evidently belonging to a Scotchman. He was an indented servant, who had been caught by the patrol running away from his master, and who, after being corrected, had been set in the pillory, both as a further aid to his reclamation, and also as an example to terrify others from the like practice. The remains of an egg, thrown by the hand of an urchin, were trickling slowly down one cheek, while some dried blood

about his head told where a pebble had found its mark earlier in the day. But the passers-by had nothing but railing for him. Old Virginia had no sympathy to spare for runaways. Had not his passage over, and his five years' service been paid for by so many hogsheads of his master's tobacco? And beside, were not he and his like the curse of the country, living in swamps and woods as they did, killing hogs and committing other injuries upon the inhabitants? Whatever punishment the rogue was getting was no more than his deserts. Let him sit and think on his sins, and be thankful that it was his first and not his second offence, else would a branding as well as a whipping have been added to the rest.

Perhaps the look in the Scotchman's brooding eyes meant repentance, or perhaps he was merely calculating how much more additional service his balked attempt was going to cost him.

There was a little stir among the crowd. Their Honours were coming out of the Court-house. Mr. Robert Carter of Corotoman, the Justice, had a paper in his hand. He was going to address the convicts.

CHAPTER III

HOW ANTHONY SHIPLEY CAME TO PINE MOUNT

In all the length of Virginia you could not have found a more typical example of a Virginian gentleman of the early part of the eighteenth century than Mr. Justice Carter. An imposing figure, standing six-foot-two in his buckled shoes, his genial face looked out confidently at the world from his great, full-bottomed periwig. In spite of its bulky proportions, the figure was that of a man who was used to athletic exercise, whose daily practice it was to shoot, or hunt, or ride his fine horses with the sure-footed recklessness which had come to be known as "the planter's pace." None who saw him, either, but would have realised how promptly the hand under the costly Flanders ruffle could go to his sword-hilt, and have thought twice before provoking an encounter with so formidable an antagonist. His manners were those of the man of the world accustomed to a position of great authority.

If the convicts had not realised before that the new country to which his Majesty had signified it as his royal pleasure that they should be transported, was not inclined to give them an effusive welcome, they would have

How Anthony came to Pine Mount 27

been enabled to gather as much from the expression of the Justice's face as he looked at them. He had evidently been speaking his mind to Mr. Jeremiah Nepho on the subject. The little merchant stood uncovered and cringing before him.

"This practice of importing felons finds no favour in Virginia, Mr. Nepho," he said, shortly. "His sacred Majesty, sure, cannot know how heartily the planters are against it; Still, since the rogues are here——"

"Thank you, your honour," said Mr. Nepho, with obsequious gratitude. It was the note he had been waiting for. Dislike the idea, in the abstract, as they might, with the rich land crying out to be planted, it was not to be supposed that anyone there present was going to actually decline his Majesty's gift.

The Justice, without taking any more notice of Mr. Nepho than if he had been a buzzing mosquito, beckoned for the convicts to be brought before him. There were certain formalities to be gone through. The Act for their government and retention in the Colony had to be read aloud to them.

As the wretched creatures approached, Mr. Carter took out his delicately-scented handkerchief and held it as a screen between himself and them. It was on this handkerchief that Anthony Shipley's eyes fastened. In some way, the extreme candour of the little action brought his position home to him in a way that even Mr. Nepho's ebony cane had not done. His appreciation of the incident caused

him to lose the first words of the Act his Honour was reading. Afterwards, in the long watches of the night, he found that without consciously listening to them, some of the words had seared themselves into his brain. There was a whole paragraph, for instance, which he found he could repeat by heart, although he could have sworn that, at the time, he had only heard an ominous word here and there.

“ . . . ye shall be held, compelled, and obliged to serve and obey your owner or purchaser in his plantation, in all such labour or service as ye shall be commanded to perform and do by your owner, master, or mistress, or their overseers, for the full time and term of ten years from the day of your landing.”

The Justice's sonorous voice ceased, and folding the paper, he handed it to a clerk to be put back among the official documents of the Court-house. Then with a parting glance at the convicts, such as he might have given to a flock of unclean vultures, he turned away. Quite small things, at supreme moments, make the strangest impresson on one's mind. Thus Anthony Shipley, following him with his eye, found himself absorbed in wondering at what precise distance from himself and his fellows his Honour would find himself able to dispense with the services of his scented handkerchief.

He was roused by the grasp of a hand on his arm. It was not the grasp of good fellowship. Rather was it the appraising touch which he himself would have bestowed on a

horse, in examining its points. In an instant the boy's unmanacled hand had leapt to his side, to the precise place where, if it had been possible to imagine such a vagabond as this possessing such a thing, a sword might have hung. The shock of finding his hand close on empty air brought him rapidly and quickly to earth again. Not even the shrewd, grey eyes of Mr. Myron Slaughter were cooler or more alert than the blue ones which gave him back his gaze.

"Here's a cock that needs his comb cut, Mr. Nepho," said the overseer carelessly. He ran his hand down the boy's arm again. "Why, he's as lean as a sand-hill crane!" he said, in calm disparagement.

"Well, a lean dog for a long chase, you know, Mr. Slaughter," answered Mr. Nepho, getting ingratiating, even to the overseer, now that he saw in him a probable purchaser. "Besides, consider the hardships and fatigues he has undergone, and the scurvy victuals he's been living on, these two months. Fill his belly with good corn bread, and in a week's time you won't know him for the same."

The muscles under the arm Mr. Slaughter was manipulating had begun to stand out like whip-cord. The overseer grunted approvingly. "He seems sound enough," he said. "Open your mouth and show us your teeth, lad."

The mouth in question shut down like a steel trap.

"Can't you understand plain English?" asked the overseer, astonished. Then again,

and with gathering impatience. "Open your mouth, lad, I say!"

This time Anthony Shipley complied with the request. But it was to utter the words, "You insolent dog!"

The overseer did not rail out at him. But he did something far more deady and significant. He laughed.

"I think I must have this one, Mr. Nepho, if 'tis only to mend his manners," he said. "If you'll unloose him from the other ruffian, I'll take him along now."

Mr. Nepho beckoned up the sailor who had charge of the handcuffs.

"You're sure I can't entice you into purchasing any more of 'em, Mr. Slaughter?" he asked unheedingly. "This red-headed rascal, now, who's as strong as an ox——"

"Faith, no," declined the overseer. "One of the cut-throat villains at a time is as much as I durst face Madam with."

"How will you take him?" enquired Mr. Nepho as though he were talking of a bale of merchandise.

"On shanks's mare!" retorted the overseer laconically.

"I can loan you a pair of light, single handcuffs," suggested Mr. Nepho obligingly.

"Oh, I'll make shift with a rope," the overseer told him, in his careless security.

With the turn of the key in the padlock of the handcuff, Anthony Shipley took a swift glance round. It was the glance of the trapped animal searching for a loophole of escape.

It did not pass Mr. Slaughter's sharp eyes unnoticed.

"None of that, lad!" he said grimly. "We give your kind no law here. And with half the mounted gentry of the Rappahannoc in full cry after you, where'd you be?"

Anthony Shipley gave in to the force of the overseer's reasoning as, earlier in the day, he had given in to the Captain's. And when Mr. Nepho fussily produced a stout rope and, perhaps with some memory of his silver-topped cane, knotted it so tightly about his wrists that it cut into the flesh, he made no protest. The onlookers thought him subdued. A close student of human nature, taking the keenness of the blue eyes into consideration, might have realised that this boy was one to take, and not to throw away his chances.

Mr. Slaughter caught the end of the rope Mr. Nepho flung up to him, and looping it in a strong loop, slung it over his arm, and put his horse in motion. His captive perforce followed him wherever he went, now standing while the overseer chatted to a friend, now walking at the mare's tail while he talked over business connected with stock to a fellow-overseer, now running at a hand gallop as they went from one extremity of the market-place to the other. Mr. Slaughter didn't give him so much as a look, or bestow any more attention on him than if he had been a dog trotting along at his side. It might almost have seemed as though he had forgotten his existence altogether. But this was not the case.

His business at Fredericksburg finished, the overseer made his adieus to the Captain, undertaking to deliver certain verbal messages from him to the family at Pine Mount, and turned his face from the market-place. He took his prisoner at not much more than a walking-pace past the Court-house yard, where not a convict remained, past the prison and the ivy-covered church, and into the main street where a crowd of negroes and indented servants, in charge of coaches and horses, were patiently awaiting their masters' pleasure. Along the unpaved roadway, the soft white sand sinking above the horse's hoofs with every step, at the same unhurried pace went Mr. Slaughter, finally drawing rein at the entrance to a densely-timbered wood.

The leaves had not yet begun to bud, but the wood was a blaze of colour. Vivid flashes of crimson among the bare tree-trunks came from the scarlet blooms of the flowering maple, while the purple-reds of the skunk-cabbage, and the emerald tints of the coming vegetation, glimpsed through the dank mat of fallen winter leaves. To eyes accustomed to the sober tints of an English landscape the wood held in itself something tropical and strange. It had been cold enough in the earlier part of the day. Now, with one of those sudden changes of climate peculiar to Virginia, the sun's rays had changed the atmosphere for a brief hour from chilliest spring to radiant summer.

Bringing his horse to a standstill, Mr.

How Anthony came to Pine Mount 33

Slaughter turned and looked at his companion for the first time. A jerk of the rope fetched the boy to his side.

"Now, my lad," said the overseer, slowly, "down on your marrow-bones, and ask my pardon for the sass you gave me just now."

"Not I!" returned Anthony Shipley, with a free scorn which consorted oddly with his villainous dress and bedraggled appearance.

"Well, maybe you'll feel more inclined towards it after I've breathed you a little," remarked Mr. Slaughter, without heat. "I'm going to take you home at a livelier pace than perhaps will be agreeable to you. But when you've a mind to give in, and do my bidding, give a hitch to the rope, and I'll perhaps slacken speed."

Anthony Shipley lifted his head until, although the overseer was on horse-back and he afoot, it almost seemed as though he were looking down, and not up, at the latter. "Set your pace!" he said proudly.

Mr. Slaughter did set the pace. It was no easy one. It would have taken a strong man, and not a boy enfeebled by cruel usage to the point of emaciation, like Anthony Shipley, to have kept it with any comfort to himself.

Past cleared lands, where women ran out of the log cabins with children in their arms, and dogs barked, and ducks and chickens got out of their way, they swept. Overhead the squirrels barked with excitement, and a startled deer went past them like a flash of lightning.

The boy was keeping the pace. But little gasping sounds came to the overseer from behind, and he smiled to himself.

A narrow run of water, swollen by yesterday's rain, plashed across the bridle path. The mare took it like a bird. So did the boy. But glancing at him out of the tail of his eye, Mr. Slaughter saw that his face had gone as white as the horn of an elk before the sun has scorched it.

They had reached higher ground, and the going was harder now. The vines and brambles of the underbrush tore at the boy's clothes. Once the grunting of hogs was followed by a scamper of little pigs under his feet, which nearly overset him. Twice the overseer put the mare at a fallen log, and wondered afresh to find the boy still on his feet.

Anthony Shipley was labouring and panting like a spent hound before the overseer drew rein.

"Well, lad," he said, "wilt ask my pardon, now?"

"No," answered the boy.

"You want some more of it, I see," remarked the overseer, and gave the mare her head.

They took the sunk fence of an old field at a bound, and avoiding the young pines and the sassafras trees, forced their way through a blue and waving sea that was really sedge-grass. With a sudden "whirr-r" a partridge flew up in front of them, thus unconsciously



"Anthony was panting like a spent hound before the
overseer drew rein."

[p. 34.]

saving her life from the talons of a pigeon-hawk, which was hovering in the air ready to pounce.

Through the sedge-grass to the open, and then into a deeper forest clattered the bay, Anthony Shipley always following. At the thud of the hoofs the wild turkey ceased to gobble to his mate and an agitated cat-bird stopped singing in the thicket. Through the branches which stopped up the hole of the hollow tree in the copse appeared a cautious black paw. It belonged to a bear, whom the noise had finally awakened from his winter slumbers.

Anthony Shipley knew none of these things. Sight and hearing were both dulled. The flaming scarlet of the maple blooms hurt his eyes, and the hoof-beats were beginning to beat into his brain.

Mr. Slaughter pulled up so suddenly that the boy, unable to check himself, was carried past the mare, and being brought up by the tether, was jerked off his feet. Picking himself up he drew his joined hands with a half blinded gesture across his forehead, from which the perspiration was rolling in great drops.

"Give in, lad!" advised the overseer sharply. It was plain the boy took in the sense of his words with difficulty. But Mr. Slaughter was easily able to interpret the slow movement of his head into one of refusal. "Well, if you *will* have it," said the man, and dug his spurs into the mare's flanks.

Suddenly the cruel red of the flowering maple ceased to dazzle the boy's eyes. As far as he could see at all, he knew that all in front of him was cool, and dark, and green. Then the strange, friendly fragrance that had been wafted out to him on board the ship was around him on all sides. It touched his burning face and his tortured body like a caress. There was no underbrush here to claw at him and impede his passage. Something soft, and deliciously yielding, made a carpet for his feet. It was the fallen pine-needles. They had come into the pine woods.

He was running through a dim and lovely aisle, where the pine-trees met on either side, and the murmur of their bending tops sounded like a chant. It made him think of the village church at home where the sound of the sea came in through the windows, and of his mother, and how they had listened to the sound together. Anthony Shipley, his tongue lolling out, smiled as he ran.

Was some power given to the sweet mother sleeping in the sea-girt Yorkshire churchyard to reach out to her boy, in this his hour of utmost need? Soft hands, tremulous and passionate, and divinely strong—as strong as mother-love—were helping him on, surely? And was not that tender sound in his ears the voice with which she had crooned over him as a little child?

He had stopped running now. With the unseen hands to stay his feet, he stood erect and still, although Mr. Slaughter had brought

up his horse so sharply that it reared on its haunches. They were standing before the gates of his Yorkshire home, the great gates of wrought iron with their blazing coat-of-arms and their proud motto "Je puis." His mother, he knew, would be waiting beside them in her white gown, watching for his coming as she had always done, even after he had been away from her for only a little time. He was so sure that she would be there, that he called, "Mother! Mother!" and his voice, in spite of his swollen tongue, sounded gay and boyish and sweet.

Mr. Slaughter, sitting on his bay mare, was looking down at him with a sudden and great concern. On the boy's face was the look that would only be seen on it once again—that wonderful, estatic look that comes to those whose footsteps have already begun to cross the Great River.

Then the mists cleared away from Anthony Shipley's brain. He looked from the gates—the great gates of wrought iron, with their blazing coat of arms, and the proud motto of his house "Je puis," to the overseer.

"Tell me where I am," he said.

It was the voice of command, the voice of the master to the servant, and the involuntary motion of Mr. Slaughter's hand was to his hat.

He checked the impulse, of course. But the mere fact of having been led into making it, changed his mood. A minute since one could have sworn that his face had held both

pity and admiration. Now he said in surly tones,

“Where should ye be, if not at Pine Mount, the house of Madame Rolleston—your mistress.”

“But the gates, man—the gates?” cried the other.

“Well, what about them?” asked the overseer with asperity. “Ye didn’t suppose, did ye, that a great house like Pine Mount would be approached by a latchet door? Madam had the gates brought over from Whitby Court, her own plantation on York River, and I did hear tell as they was copied from some belonging to her grand kinsfolk in England. But plague on ’t! What’s got into a rascalion like you, to want to know about such things?”

Anthony Shipley did not enlighten him. His face had assumed its former mask of impassivity.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH MISS JOYCE ROLLESTON IS SENT TO HER CHAMBER

Pine Mount, or "the Gre't House" as the negroes called it, was a long, low, wooden mansion, painted white. From its roof of cypress shingle peeped dormer windows. On a level with them, but on the other side of the house, was a large wooden box with holes in which the martin built his nest and in return for Madam's hospitality protected her poultry from the hawks. The smoke from the chimney at each end curled cheerfully over the tops of the old locust trees with which it was surrounded. Its windows were sashed with crystal glass, for Madam Rolleston kept up a great state.

Kitchens, outbuildings, tobacco-houses, fields and orchards were behind. In front were flower-gardens and terraces sloping down to the river. Standing on rising ground as the house did, the view from it was magnificent. Beyond the river were interminable woods, level for miles, and then rising until their sombre green was absorbed into the magic blue of the Blue Ridge, where all Joyce Rolleston's fairy-tales began and ended. The long avenue leading up from the gates

was lined with cherry-trees, which soon would be a mass of bloom. Patches of black on the smooth green sward were naked piccaninies, who were every now and then shoo'd off the forbidden precincts by black and white gardeners.

Logs blazed brightly in shining brass andirons in the great central hall, that afternoon. No need for fires ever to go out here, since the sable ball, coiled up in a corner of the open fireplace, was a little negro who had nothing else to do the livelong day but to replace the burnt-out logs with fresh ones. But though the warmth would be welcome enough soon, the brief spell of spring sunshine had caused doors and windows to be flung wide, and brought Madam and her company out into the porch. Dogs of every description accompanied them, barking joyously. At a little distance were the gentlemen's horses, held by their negro grooms.

The porch itself was comfortably, and even luxuriantly furnished. Rugs were on the wooden floor, and there were chairs upholstered in Russian leather, and couches covered with Turkey-worked cloth, on which in July and August days when the sun beat down upon the fields and the rosin ran out of the trees with the heat, Madam's guests could lounge and be fanned by their own or the house negroes. Not that Madam, herself, ever indulged in such practices, or ever sat in anything but the straight, high-backed chair of carven oak which so well became her. But

she was a noted hostess in the most hospitable country in the world, and no guest in her house ever went with a whim ungratified.

To-day, Madam's company seemed to fill the porch, wide as it was. Madam sat among them, busy with her quilting-frame, while her daughter Joyce worked her sampler on a low seat at her side. Madam did not approve of idle hands. The son of the house, Tudor Rolleston, splendidly handsome and assured, moved gaily among the guests. He should, by rights, have been at his College of William and Mary, at Williamsburg, but owing to an infectious fever, which had broken out there, the young gentlemen had been despatched, for the time being, to their respective homes.

His friend Robert Beverley, the younger, he whose father had made a History of Virginia, and who was also debarred from pursuing his studies at William and Mary, was staying in the house. So, too, was that lovely child, Evelyn Byrd, who was sitting with a fond hand on Joyce Rolleston's knee. She was the daughter of Colonel Byrd of Westover, the flower of Virginian chivalry, who was so great a favourite at the English court. Soon Evelyn would be going to an English boarding-school, but until then Madam had persuaded the Colonel to let the motherless little girl stay with her and share Joyce's studies.

These studies were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Swann, a young minister who had been educated at Oxford, and who had acted as tutor to Tudor, before the latter had been

promoted to the dignity of college life. As well as Joyce Rolleston and Evelyn Byrd, Mr. Swann taught Molly Ball, daughter of Major Ball of Epping Forest, and Susie and Bob Carter, the children of Mr. Justice Carter of Corotoman, whose acquaintance we have already made. They were all here, out on the porch, as well as Molly Ball's elder brother Joseph, who had come to escort her home.

Bob Carter was in an unhappy frame of mind. Not only had his knuckles been rapped raw with Mr. Swann's ferule, and for nothing at all beyond the fact that he had introduced a musk-rat into the tutor's desk, but he had also been given certain hateful portions of the Latin grammar to say on the morrow. Since any appeal to his father would have brought far worse ills on his shoulders, there was nothing for Bob to do but to bear it, although the irony of the situation lay in the fact that he could have broken the weedy tutor across his knee. Still, Joyce had whispered a cheering promise to come to the school-room and assist him to master the intricacies of the declension of "dominus" as soon as she could slip away from the company, which it was part of her duties as daughter of the house to help her mother to entertain.

In consequence, Bob stood and glowered at Joseph Ball, who had engaged her in conversation on a subject which he always found vastly interesting, namely himself. What in sweet Molly Ball, with her peach-bloom face, and high resolved brow, was all sweet serious-

ness, was in brother Joseph mere pomposity. His self-sufficient airs got him no favour from Joyce and as far as she durst be rude to a guest in her mother's presence, she was rude to him now. But brother Joseph was not thin-skinned, and took Joyce's half-averted shoulder as nothing more than a proof of the diligent care she was bestowing on her sampler. Susie Carter was watching the little scene with wicked enjoyment. She was a pretty likeness of her brother. But while Bob's up-turned nose gave him the appearance of an honest pug, Susie's tip-tilted at a distracting and adorable angle, which, with black ringlets, blacker eyes and a coquettish toss of her head, threatened to render the young lady a source of danger to Virginian youth.

Among Madam's guests was young Mr. Fauce of Green Briars, who had that day, you remember, sent one of his servants to be whipped at the Court-house. He was talking deferentially to Madam, but out of one corner of his dark eyes he was observing every stitch which Miss Joyce Rolleston put into her sampler. The stitches became few and far between when Mr. Jacques Fontaine began to tell Madam of the journey over the Blue Ridge Mountains, which he had taken with his Excellency and other adventurous Virginian gentlemen some time before.

Mr. Jacques Fontaine was a young Englishman who, with his parents, had come to settle in Virginia a few years ago. He was a modest youth, and did not put himself forward in the

narrative in the way that brother Joseph would have done had the like experiences befallen him. Still, the adventure was thought a good deal of in Virginia, in those days, and Mr. Fontaine may have been stimulated to unexpected eloquence by an occasional glance into Miss Rolleston's eyes of shining grey. The younger members of the party had gathered round as they caught the fascinating nature of the theme that was being discussed, so that Mr. Fontaine found himself with quite an audience about him.

When he told how the party had toiled up the slopes of the Blue Ridge, where no white man's footsteps had ever been before them, all unknowing what they were to find beyond, Joyce's sampler slipped to the ground.

"Would I had been there!" she breathed.

"You, sister!" Tudor Rolleston laughed with all an elder brother's superiority. "Such an enterprise as Mr. Fontaine is relating is proper for men, and not for girls. Your place is here, at mother's side, playing the harpsichord, and attending to household affairs."

Bob Carter snorted. "Why, Joyce can out-ride you bareback!" he exclaimed. "Do you mind how——"

Mr. Fauce, still finding much to interest him in his study of Miss Rolleston, discerned a sudden movement under the young lady's quilted petticoat, that put an abrupt end to Master Carter's reminiscences. A second afterwards, he heard a compunctious murmur from Miss Rolleston in Bob's direction, con-

taining a reference to "my mamma," and an eager offer to loan him an evidently much prized bow and arrows, which the gentleman was not above accepting.

Madam had noticed nothing of the little by-play. "I pray you tell us what you saw, sir, when you reached the summit of the Blue Ridge," she said graciously.

"In truth, you set me a hard task, Madam," answered Mr. Fontaine. "I think the most of us held our breath till his Excellency said, 'Sure, 'tis God's country we have discovered!' Imagine, Madam, a rainbow sea of grass and flowers rippling in waves to mountains that touch the clouds and silvered by a river which the Indians call 'The Daughter of the Stars!'"

"Could anything be more lovely?" murmured Joyce Rolleston, with clasped hands.

"Yes, madam," answered young Mr. Fauce, suddenly and softly.

"And what might that be, sir?" asked Joyce, frankly interested.

Mr. Fauce smiled to himself, without answering. Joyce was only a child still, it seemed. Madam looked up with a half frown and a little sigh. Susie Carter wondered how her friends could be so dull.

"I graved my name on a tree by the river side," continued Mr. Fontaine, with a naïf pride, while Joyce turned again to listen. Mr. Fauce bore her defection tranquilly. He was too much a man of the world not to realise that her interest was in Mr. Fontaine's narrative and not in Mr. Fontaine himself. It was

the interest of a gay and gallant boy in a tale of hardy adventure rather than that of a girl who, in a few short months, would be presented to his Excellency, at his palace at Williamsburg, to inaugurate the beginning of her reign as a Virginian young lady. There would be toasts drunk and swords drawn for Joyce Rolleston then, if the look in young Mr. Beverley's plain, kind face and true eyes was anything to go by.

"Did not his Excellency present all the gentlemen who accompanied him on the expedition with a trophy to commemorate it by?" asked Madam.

"And did he not dub you his Knights of the Golden Horse-shoe?" added the Rev. Mr. Swann, proud to show his knowledge of current Virginian history.

"It was a pleasant conceit of his Excellency's," answered Mr. Fontaine, modestly. "Would you believe it, Madam, that we were all so used to these soft, sandy roads of yours, that when we appeared at the starting-point every man's horse was bare-footed. But his Excellency, who thinks of everything, caused them to be shod, against the mountain roads we had to traverse. And when we returned, he sent to London and had little jewelled horse-shoes made, and gave them to us as a remembrance. With your permission, Madam, I will show you the one he bestowed on me."

Madam gave a smiling assent, and the young man, taking a leather case from his pocket, was in the act of opening it, when a

startled exclamation from someone in the porch, and a general craning of heads in the direction of the avenue, arrested his hand.

If Mr. Slaughter had known that Madam and her guests would be out on the porch, he would certainly have taken Anthony Shipley round to the quarters by another way. No exception could be taken to the pace at which he was now riding, but he still had the boy on the rope, and the effects of his recent usage of him were plainly to be seen. Mr. Slaughter bit his lip at finding himself discovered. It was all in the day's work, of course, and in the end Madam would be brought to see that the discipline of the plantation must be maintained. Still, on the whole, the overseer would have preferred that things had fallen out another way, especially as, after glancing uneasily round to see if this were the case, he perceived "little Miss" to be among the spectators.

Madam, chill surprise in her face, rose up from her high-backed chair, and beckoned the overseer forward. He came unwillingly, Anthony Shipley perforce following.

"What means this, sir?" asked Madam, with a haughty wave of her hand in the prisoner's direction.

"I humbly beg your Honour's pardon," answered the overseer, uncovering. "But the plantation needs more hands, as your Honour well knows. And since I lighted on a batch of convicts for sale at Fredericksburg to-day, I made bold to buy one."

"You overstepped your duty, sir," returned Madam, in sharp reprimand. Yet it was significant that she made no suggestion that Mr. Slaughter's purchase should be returned. Madam was a thrifty and prudent manager, for all her grand ways, and realised that the overseer's words were no more than the truth.

"Blame me, Madam! But 'tis a mangy fox!" observed Mr. Fauce, after giving the latest acquisition to Pine Mount his languid attention. He did not take the trouble to lower his voice.

Madam was looking at the rope round the boy's wrist. There was a frown between her fine brows. "Was it necessary to use him thus?" she asked the overseer coldly.

"Well, your Honour, the lad had to get his breaking-in, at some time or other—as well now as later," the overseer was beginning, when a sudden remembrance that this happy result could scarcely be said to have been attained, made him pause uncertainly.

Madam raised a gemmed hand and summoned her new servant to her. He advanced to the end of his rope. He had no hat to uncover, but he gave her his serious and courteous attention. Silks and laces and jewels of the richest wore Madam, but there was no need for Anthony Shipley to look beyond her calm face and the proud blue eyes of her race, to know that this was a great lady.

Madam, like all Virginians, had a beautiful voice. Even now, in all the icy distance it

Joyce Rolleston sent to her Chamber 49

set between this felon and herself, it was still sweet.

"Your name?" she asked.

"Anthony, madam," answered the boy.

"And your other name?" enquired Madam again.

"I have no other name, madam," the boy told her proudly. "I pray you let it stand as I have said."

Tudor Rolleston rose to his feet with an exclamation. Was it possible that this gallow's-bird was daring to set his mother at defiance?

Madam, whose courtesy towards her equals had so fine a distinction that she would have entertained an unknown guest in her house for as long as he chose to stay, without throwing out a hint of curiosity as to his name, had nothing of the kind to spare here. She looked enquiringly at the overseer.

He shook his head in perplexity. "I was too taken up with taming the wild cat to enquire after his name, your Honour," he confessed at last.

Tudor Rolleston strode over to his mother's side. "Your name, sirrah?" he cried imperiously.

"I have already given my name to Madam," the convict told him with a face as calm, and a voice as cold, as Madam's own.

There was a pause in which Tudor's temper, always a high one, began to mount. Madam herself dismissed the matter as beneath her notice. After all, if this felon-

servant of hers had a name to answer to it was all that was needed. Besides, despite the spirit with which he had answered her, he looked half dead. Still, the incident caused the speech she made him to be more severe than it might otherwise have been.

"You are young in years," she said, "though not in wickedness, else would you not stand here in the shameful position you do to-day. A merciful God has saved you from the gallows. See to it that you requite His goodness by living an honest life hereafter. But you must be diligent, sober, and obedient, and order yourself humbly to those I set in authority over you, if you would make reparation for your crime. Remove him now, Mr. Slaughter, and set him not too hard a task until he has recovered."

The tall son at Madam's side laid a protecting arm across her shoulder. "You are too gentle, mother," he cried. "Ruffians like this need a man to deal with them." And still keeping the caressing hold on Madam's shoulder that made her as wax in his hands, he proceeded to supplement her harangue to the convict with one of his own. It was a liberty, of course. But then Madam permitted the handsome boy a freedom which she allowed to no one else.

It was a striking picture. On the porch was a gay company, all of the first quality in Virginia, the girls in their flowered gowns as sweet as clover blossoms, the gentlemen all pride and gallant grace. And in the fore-

ground stood Madam, still young, still beautiful and elegant, looking half reprovingly, half admiringly, at her imperious young son. Beyond the porch was the silent Mr. Slaughter, sitting his bay mare, his prisoner in tow. The haggard prisoner himself, his roped hands hanging quietly, faced them with still control.

"Look you, sirrah!" cried Tudor Rolleston, menacingly. "An you answer your mistress again in the unruly fashion you did just now it will be the worse for you. You are here for her service, remember, and must submit yourself to her will. 'Tis plain to be seen that you've yet to learn your place. Well, a good cowhide is a handy teacher, and there are enough hickory switches about the plantation to keep you humble as a dog. Show us any more insubordination and your back will smart for it. And for a beginning, take that stubborn look from off your face, or I'll order Mr. Slaughter to tie you up and lash it out!"

Somebody had risen to her feet. A girl, slender as a willow wand, and as erect as a young pine tree. A girl with an April face and steady eyes into which a man could look as Mr. Fauce had looked just now, and wonder if one could ever come to the end of their grey depths. At present they were ablaze with generous indignation.

"Shame, brother!" she cried. "Thrice shame, to bait thus the weak and helpless!"

Her voice rang out brave and free, but young Mr. Beverley took a step forward as if

to protect her from the anger he saw in Madam's eye. It was not thus that girls in Virginia were taught to conduct themselves before their elders.

Madam disengaged herself from her son's arm. She looked very tall and stately.

"You put yourself too forward, daughter," she observed coldly. "I do not know that I gave you leave to meddle in my affairs. And if your brother needs reproof, sure I am the one to give it, and not you. Go to your chamber now and come not out of it again until to-morrow. No, not a word!" This last with an upraised hand to the younger members of the party who had begun to utter incoherent beseechings.

Joyce curtsied low to Madam, her lip a-quiver. But there was no bitterness either in her face or her heart. This was too sweet and wholesome a nature to harbour a thought of resentment against her mother for exercising her undoubted right to punish what she considered unbecoming behaviour. Old Pharaoh, the black butler, escorted her the whole length of the verandah, openly grumbling against Madam in a way no white person present was daring to do.

At the door Joyce dropped another curtsey—a prouder one—to the group of embarrassed gentlemen. Oh, it was hard, hard, thus to be humiliated before them all, and she turned away her head so that they should not see the tears in her eyes.

The movement caused her to encounter the

gaze of the convict she had defended. Up till this moment she had not considered him personally at all. He was just something poor, and spent, and ill, who she could see needed the support of Mr. Slaughter's rope to keep him on his feet at all. Now, unexpectedly, she met his eye and saw a strange look in them. They were the bluest eyes she had ever seen—and the softest—although Joyce Rolleston was the only person in Virginia who had yet found them so.

Ah, Joyce Rolleston, of the April face, and the child's smile, and the steady eyes, were hearts to break as well as swords to be drawn for you in the days to come ?

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH MISS JOYCE ROLLESTON IS CONSOLED

The news that "old mistis" had bade "young mistis" keep her chamber for the rest of the day flew over Pine Mount. The commotion it created was as great as though some real calamity had befallen the plantation. The kitchen was some distance away from the house, but the news had penetrated there almost before Joyce had crossed the great hall, and mounted the carved staircase that led up to her own room. The clack and clatter that ensued were indescribable. Their "Mis' Joyce's" trouble was everybody's trouble. The latter assumed a more personal form, certainly, when Aunt Hebe, the sable potentate of the kitchen, fell upon the chattering throng and smacked the dusky shoulders of her kitchen-wenches, by way of relieving her feelings. Then turning over the preparation of a cunningly-spiced concoction of picked crab and sallet flowers, destined for Madam's evening meal, to less accomplished hands, she prepared to put the culinary skill which a royal cook might have envied into the making of a certain kind of crisp brown gingerbread such as Joyce's soul loved. In the same way old Pharaoh left "de quality" in the porch to

take care of itself, and retired to the hall, where, after kicking into wakefulness the ebony imp who had charge of the logs, he began to mix a mint julep that should transcend all others. Mint julep was the national beverage. But no butler in all Virginia was such a past master in the art of mixing it as was Pharaoh.

From the window of "the chamber," that heterogeneous apartment, half drawing-room, half work-room, opening from the great hall, where, under Madam's supervision, the sewing women belonging to the plantation cut out and made the clothes for the negroes, Sukey, Miss Joyce's maid, who was supposed to be at work on one of the latter's spotted muslin aprons, was holding a running stream of badinage with Ephra'm, Mars' Tudor's boy. But the news of Miss Rolleston's incarceration penetrating here with the same uncanny rapidity as elsewhere, Sukey dismissed her dusky admirer without the smallest ceremony. In less seconds than it takes to write it she had snatched up a candle from the chamber chimney-piece, had flown from the room, had lighted it at the open fireplace in the hall, had taken the stairs in so many flying leaps, and was on her knees igniting the resinous pine logs, laid in the andirons in her young mistress's room, into a cheerful blaze. Sukey was old Pharaoh's granddaughter and had been brought up with Joyce in the close personal intimacy that prevailed between the black and white children in the South in

those days. The same relation had existed between Mars' Tudor and Ephra'm, Mammy Chloe's son. But while Tudor had developed into Ephra'm's indulgent if capricious master, Joyce had remained Sukey's friend.

Following upon Sukey's heels there swept into the room a majestic incarnation of wrath and pity and every comfortable human quality. The incarnation whirled the black girl out of her path, and advanced with outstretched arms to the treasure, the joy, the jewel of her life—Mis' Joyce.

"Mammy!" cried Joyce, and with a sound like the cheep of a chicken when it nestles under its mother's wing, she flung herself into the refuge that had never failed her, and burying her flushed cheeks in the black woman's capacious breasts was sobbing out her trouble as she had done when a little child.

"Has dey serve mammy's baby dat ar way? Has dey darst?" murmured Mammy, over and over again. Holding the slender child as lightly and easily in her arms as though she had indeed been the baby she had never ceased to consider her, Mammy sat down in the big rocking-chair and began to rock slowly and rhythmically until the sobs subsided. Then she turned on Sukey.

"Dat gal gwine be de death ob me—she sholy am!" she declared. "What you stand dere for, you black good-for-nuffin, 'stid o' perkurin' water to lave your Mis' Joyce's eyes?"

Sukey flew to ewer and basin, tumbling over herself to execute the commission, and Mammy bathed the child's eyes with the soothing touch only black fingers can attain. She had scarcely finished drying them on the fine damask towel when there came a knock at the door, and old Pharaoh entered, bearing a cut-glass goblet in his hands.

"I got somepin mos' oncommon nice for you heah, chile," he said, his old black face all tenderness. "You des gotter drink it right now. Ole mistis' she say, 'Pharaoh, you stop and 'scort de company out ob de porch.' But I up and tell her I got somepin more 'portant to do. Yes, *in-deed*! I got mix mint julep for mah lil' Miss Joyce!"

The flavour of peaches and fresh mint came up from the shredded ice in the goblet, and Joyce accepted it gratefully. After all, even a young lady who has been sent out of the room in disgrace before a crowd of gallants may find alleviations to her lot when she is sipping mint julep mixed by a supreme artist, when she is being nursed and petted by her black mammy, and when the bright light of the pine-logs on the hearth is not more bright than the glow of love in the eyes of her hand-maid.

Madam might punish Joyce publicly for an impropriety in behaviour, as she had done just now, but no one could look round the pretty bedroom without realising that the mother who had furnished it for her little daughter was a loving as well as a proud one. Until

lately, Joyce had always slept in Madam's own room, on the little trundle-bed that in the day-time was kept under Madam's great four-poster, hidden from sight by its valances of gold and silver texture. But last year, Madam had had this chamber prepared for her, and given it her as a birthday gift. No small princess could have had a daintier one.

"Hoccum yo' fret yousef' honey, 'bout po' white trash like dat ar convict?" enquired Mammy, after Pharaoh had departed with the empty goblet, and then wished she had not asked the question when she saw the effect it had on her nursling.

"He looked so sad, so spent, so suffering, Mammy," said Joyce, clinging to her again at the remembrance. "And then to threaten to whip him—with his hands tied like that—oh, it was base!"

"Wa'al, dey ain't gwine whip him, honey," the black woman told her soothingly. "Yo' done stop that. Ole mistis, she tell Massa Slaughter take him 'way, an' loose his hands. An' Pharaoh say she up an' spoke right out to Mars' Tudor, an' tell him not to be cruel laik dat, no mo'."

At this moment a vivid turban surmounting a shining black face poked itself round the door. When the rest of Aunt Hebe appeared in sight she was seen to be bearing in triumph a pewter plate, heaped high with golden-brown gingerbread cut into fantastic shapes. Joyce shrieked with frank joy at the sight, and her little firm teeth crunched into the crisp

offerings with a whole-hearted pleasure that enchanted Aunt Hebe. It was with open disgust, though, that she observed the liberal dole that was made to Sukey.

Sukey, answering a knock at the door, had brought Mammy Chloe a mysterious message that her presence was required downstairs. Mammy was absent quite a little space of time. When she came back there was the oddest look on her face.

No two human countenances in the world could have offered a greater contrast than Madam's chiselled features and the broad traits of the African. Yet the expression on the black woman's face as she watched her little charge sitting on the rug in front of the fire, eating gingerbread with Sukey, reproduced in some curious way the wistful regard Madam had given to her young daughter when she heard Mr. Fauce pay her that softly-spoken compliment that Joyce had not understood.

Joyce was Mammy's idol. Tudor was her nursling, and Ephra'm was her son, and Mammy had done her duty by both, slapping them up, almost to their present age, with unceasing care and vigilance. But Joyce was something apart.

There were two Mammy Chloes, although her white folks were quite unaware of the fact. There was the comfortable, faithful soul who identified herself with the family: who made their interests her interests: who accepted their rulings as just: who studied the Bible her little mistress had taught her to read and

listened reverently while Madam expounded it. It was this Mammy Chloe who was vastly proud that her son Ephra'm had attained to the high position of being Mars' Tudor's boy.

But there was another Mammy Chloe, whose soul sometimes peeped out of the sombre depths of the black woman's eyes. This was the Mammy Chloe in whose veins ran the blood of African kings and into whose passionate heart the knowledge had bitten deeply that the only position she had been able to give the man child she had brought into the world was that of a slave. Mammy's affection for Ephra'm was of the silent, deep-seated kind that found no outward expression in the endearments she lavished on Joyce. But it was when Mammy thought of Ephra'm that she stole out of the house in the dead of night to the cave under the willows of the Rappahannoc, and there practised the forbidden "voodoo" worship, as its rites were celebrated on African shores.

But if Mammy's love for Ephra'm was largely mixed with tragedy, her passion for Joyce was pure joy. The little fair child who belonged to her in a closeness of relationship only second to that of a mother gave her her right to pride. All that Mammy had missed in her own life, she lived again in Joyce's. And though Joyce herself was a child still, Mammy felt the thrum of her coming triumphs in the air. It was an age when girls married early. Many a bride had been wooed and wed

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in Virginia before she had attained her sixteenth year.

After watching the little figure on the rug for a moment in silence, Mammy observed in a voice of studied indifference, "Dat boy, Ephra'm, dar, jes fetch me down to Massa Fauce. 'Pears he got a lady's saddle for his hoss A'chduke. 'Specs he gwine ask ole mistis let you ride wid him termorrow mawnin', honey."

"Archduke!" Joyce's eyes were like stars. "Why, he's the most famous horse in all Virginia, Mammy. Oh, Mammy, do you—*do* you think mamma will give me leave to ride to-morrow? For as you know 'tis the clear-starching day, and only last week she bade me improve myself in the crimping of Tudor's ruffles."

"I 'mos' sure ole mistis not say nuffin' 'bout de ruffles termorrow, honey," Mammy told her reassuringly, and then fell to meditating on her own account. Joyce's frank enchantment at the idea of the treat Mr. Fauce was planning for her must have pleased any man. But her anticipation of the pleasure to be derived from it seemed to take singularly little account of Mr. Fauce himself.

Having reached this stage in her meditations Mammy said in a detached sort of way,

"I done met Mars' Beverley, too, honey."

"Did you, Mammy?" asked Joyce indifferently. "Sukey, if you eat any more of that

gingerbread, you'll be sick. And you know what mamma's black draughts are!"

"Yes, Mis' Joyce," agreed Sukey regretfully, but obediently ceasing to munch. Like every soul on the plantation she had a profound distaste for Madam's remedies. Like everybody else, too, she infinitely preferred the disease.

"He tol' me tell you, honey, dat he gwine ride home for to tote you back his pappa's Hist'ry. He done say it might divert you, chile, case you is too 'disposed to jine de comp'ny downstairs dis ebening."

"Indisposed!" repeated Joyce, astonished. Suddenly she went as pink as a swamp rose. "I suppose it was his breeding made him put it like that," she said. "He knows quite well that mamma won't permit me to come down again to-night. They all know!"

"Lord love you, honey, you des won't lose nuffin 'kase o' dat!" declared Mammy enigmatically, adding with a sharp glance, "Dat a mighty long ride Mars' Beverley gwine take for yo', chile."

"So it is, and 'tis vastly civil in him," agreed Joyce pleasantly.

No one knows so well what is going on in her baby's heart as an old black Mammy. And because Mammy liked Mars' Beverley, or in her own words considered him "de prime cut," she regretted the facile assent. But having learnt all she wanted to know with regard to the state of Joyce's feelings toward the youth, she went on in the same dull tone

in which she had made her other announcements, "I done see Massa Swann waitin' on de stairs. I tuk a notion he waitin' fo' me, an' I up an' ask him."

"And was he, Mammy?" asked Joyce.

"Lawdy, no, honey!" declared Mammy veraciously. "But he tuk de 'portunity to say dem book tasks he set yo' for termorrow, you don't need do dem *at all*!"

Joyce opened her eyes. "I should as soon have expected favours from Blackbeard," she said frankly. "I haven't been able to bring myself to speak to him since he beat Bob, this morning, and rapped Susie Carter over the shoulder right smartly with his ferule for a fault she made in her ciphering."

"Does he rap yo' dat a'way, honey?" asked Mammy, a dangerous something in her voice.

"No, Mammy," answered Joyce.

She said it quite simply, but with a touch of unconscious but almost regal dignity eminently characteristic. Madam had never struck Joyce in her life and it was an age when girls as well as boys were chastised by their parents. Mammy, who under no circumstance would have withheld wholesome correction from either Tudor or Ephra'm, had never laid her black hand save in fondest devotion on this child's fair body. It is possible that Mr. Swann's understanding of the African race would have been considerably quickened, had he subjected Joyce as well as Susie to the discipline of his ferule.

Her fears set at rest on this important point

Mammy went on as though she were repeating a lesson. "I done met Mars' Bob, honey. He tol' me tell you he gwine larn 'dom'nus' hissef, an' dat he see de fust jasmine out in de woods ter-day. 'Specs dat boy gwine tote yo' some in."

"Poor Bob," said Joyce, really flattered. She realised that Bob's promise to tackle the abhorred declension was a pure concession to her own dislike to seeing Mr. Swann's ferule at work on his person. The further condescension exhibited in his half promise about the jasmine filled her with awe.

"I done met Massa Fontaine, honey," said Mammy again, breaking in on her surprised thoughts.

"What, another of them!" exclaimed Joyce, staring at her.

"It sholy am 'mazin'," agreed Mammy. Taking from her apron a little leather case—the same we saw in Mr. Jacques Fontaine's hold when the advent of Anthony Shipley had drawn Joyce's attention from himself—she put it into the girl's hands, with the remark, "He say he mos' sure you wisht 'xamine it des now, honey."

Joyce gave a little cry of pleasure as she opened the case. "He must like me very much to entrust it to me, Mammy," she observed, and the black woman, glancing at her from under her eyes, found nothing in her face but the innocent child's look she expected. "It is the most precious thing he possesses. It is the badge his Excellency presented him

with after he had crossed the Blue Ridge. How ravishing it is!" She lifted up the little golden horseshoe, studded with ruby nails, with careful hands, holding it caressingly against her soft cheek.

"Goodness, lan'! But you do seem to lak it, honey," said Mammy, still probing with her eyes.

"I love it!" Joyce told her. "I'd give the world if it was mine. If I'd earned it, I mean. If I'd crossed the Blue Ridge and looked into the Great Beyond."

The fashion in which little Joyce Rolleston was to get nearer to the Great Beyond than any white woman had ever done was mercifully hidden from her. But the curious premonitory sense possessed by the black race made Mammy shiver.

"Are you cold?" asked the child solicitously. "Sukey, put on another log. Or shall I wrap you in my India shawl, Mammy?"

"I not cold, honey," answered Mammy. "'Specs I shiver 'case folks is walking ober mah grave." All the same she suddenly threw her apron over her head as if to shut out some sight Joyce's words had conjured up. The movement revealed the last of the quiverful of gifts which the gallants below had wheedled her into presenting to the imprisoned princess. This, of all things in the world, was Joyce's sampler.

"How did you come by it, Mammy?" enquired Joyce, regarding her recovered possession without enthusiasm.

Mammy removed her apron and laughed. She seemed glad to break the tension of her own thoughts. "Massa Ball done gib it to me, honey," she replied. "I declar ef he don't say he tink yo' like finish it to-day fo' to 'monstrate to ole mistis how monst'ous 'pentent you is. Mighty clever man, Massa Ball!"

If Joyce had turned as pink as a swamp rose at young Mr. Beverley's delicate reference to her situation, the red of the robin's breast was in her cheeks at brother Joseph's cruder touch. "La! the dull thing!" she cried, referring, we regret to say, to the gentleman, and not to the sampler he had restored. The latter she tossed contemptuously into a corner. But mindful of what Madam would say, should she come in and find it there, she told Sukey to pick it up and smooth out the creases.

"'Specs you say 'no' desp't quick ef he ask yo' hab him fo' a husban, honey," observed Mammy. Brother Joseph was a safe person to jest about.

"*Him!* And when I'm waiting for the prince! Oh, Mammy! how can you?" cried Joyce reproachfully. She moved over to the window and drew the printed curtain to one side, the better to see the magic mountain where the prince had his home, and from whence he would surely come. The sun was setting over its blue waves now in flaming crimson and gold.

"What prince, chile?" asked Mammy quickly.

"Why, the fairy prince, of course, Mammy," said Joyce. "The prince who always comes just at the right minute."

"How you gwine know him fo' de prince 'mong all de others, honey?" asked Mammy, a tremor in her voice.

"Why, because of the gallant deeds he has done, of course, you silly Mammy," Joyce told her. "And because he won't ask me to marry him till he's proved himself stronger and braver and nobler than them all."

"And what mah baby gwine say to him when he gone done dat?" enquired Mammy softly.

The dying sunset, cresting the Blue Ridge like bars of gold across a sapphire, was not more shining than Joyce's eyes.

"If, with all the world to choose from, he chooses just me—I shall be very glad, I think—and very proud," she said.

"He sholy will choose you, honey—ef he happens to be trabbeling dis way," returned Mammy dryly. "'Specs dat sort ob prince scarce as de silber fox!"

The black woman got up as she spoke and lighted the myrtleberry candles in the silver sconces. They burned steadily with a delightful perfume that Joyce always loved. She turned, sniffing in the fragrance with a child's pleasure, while Mammy took the opportunity to pull the curtains tightly over the enchanted world without, and draw her nursling back into the safe, homely light of the pine-wood fire. Also, later on, and despite the ginger-

bread she had consumed, the appearance of a supper tray from Aunt Hebe turned Joyce into a very human little girl again.

Joyce fell asleep almost as soon as her night-capped head touched the pillow. But Madam on her great four-poster with its silken coverlet and heavy hangings, lay staring out into the darkness. There was to be no crimping of Tudor's ruffles on the morrow for Joyce. Madam had given permission to Mr. Fauce to ride with her daughter—Mr. Fauce who was the richest match in all Virginia, and who, in the near future meant to rob Pine Mount, her own and Mammy's baby.

CHAPTER VI

THE BARS OF THE CAGE

Mammy Chloe's account of what had happened after Miss Rolleston had been obliged to make such an abrupt exit from the porch, was substantially correct. Madam had spoken with unusual sharpness to Tudor, not only intimating that she was able to manage her own affairs, but also bidding him correct his haughty temper. She had then abruptly dismissed Mr. Slaughter, after telling him to unloose the boy's hands as soon as he arrived at the quarters, and had returned to her guests, courteously but firmly intimating to them by her manner that the episode was closed. Tudor, who had gone very red under the public rebuke, looked gloweringly after the departing figure of the individual who had brought it upon him.

Anthony's brief connection with the Great House was finished. His life in Virginia was now to be lived in those parts of the plantation that lay behind it—the stables, the fields, and the quarters.

Following Mr. Slaughter and passing the stables in which were the specimens of the finest breeds of horses—horses whose sires bore renowned English names—they came to

the outbuildings, the great barns for tobacco, the great granaries for corn, as well as a crowd of lesser buildings, including cattle-pens, hen-cotes, a malt-house, and a great smoke-house, in which the bacon was cured and stored. Then came the "quarters," the abode of the negroes and indented servants. Beyond the quarters were wide acres of land cleared for planting tobacco and corn. Beyond these again was the primeval forest, with its towering trees.

On Madam's plantation, as on almost every other one in Virginia, everything was sacrificed to the cultivation of tobacco. Corn was planted extensively, of course, but for the sole purpose of supplying food for the negroes who worked in the tobacco-fields. And tobacco, besides being the great export of the country, was also its popular currency. Men counted values in "ole Virginny" by so many hogs-heads of tobacco.

No method of agriculture could have been more fatal to the land. Tobacco culture soon exhausted the soil, and once exhausted nothing was done to replenish it. Having plenty of land, the planter simply moved on, clearing new ground as he went. The old grounds, or old fields as they were called, soon became overrun with sedge-grass, sassafras bushes or young cedar trees. There were many of these old fields about Madam's plantation, marking the stages by which every fresh generation of Rollestons had exhausted the soil. Many a happy day had Joyce

Rolleston and Sukey spent in them, gathering wild strawberries in the early summer, and blackberries and chickasaw plums in the autumn.

Later on, when the negro cabins would be covered with honey-suckle or morning-glories, they would present a picturesque and attractive appearance. At present, though the smoke curled cheerfully from every chimney, the brown-logged abodes did not look particularly inviting, regarded as places of residence. Travellers of that day said, and with truth, that the cabins of the negroes were equal, if not superior, to those of the English agricultural labourer. But though this says very little for the cottages, one has to admit that much depends upon the point of view. Anthony, for instance, thought them only fit for hogs. On the other hand, Nathaniel Pet, a convict of about Anthony's own age, who had been purchased a year ago by Mr. Slaughter, and who in the intervals of jail had had no place of abode at all, sleeping at night among the cinders of the ash-holes of the glass-houses, had no fault to find with it.

Everything about the quarters bore witness to the thriftlessness of the negro character. There was no roof that did not leak, while there was scarcely a cabin in which the owners, happy-go-lucky souls, had taken the trouble to fill up the interstices of the logs. They depended for warmth on their fires, the fuel for which grew at their very door. If any

man went cold or hungry on Madam's plantation the fault was his own. Madam's allowance of corn and sweet potatoes and bacon and herrings was liberal, while each man had his own little garden plot in which he could raise fowls and vegetables. Then too, the wild-fowl of the river were theirs for the taking, while in the spring the rivers afforded a plenitude of fresh fish. Further delicacies dear to the negro palate such as 'possum, 'coon, or squirrel were also within their reach, with the excitement of the chase superadded.

Mr. Slaughter, having reached the quarters, sat pondering for a space where to domicile his new arrival. There were many indented white servants among Madam's hands, although, as it happened, only one other convict, the Nathaniel Pet, whose satisfaction in his lot we have had occasion to mention. These indented servants did the same work as the negroes and were housed in the same way. But they did not mix with them. They were lowly people, taught to know their place, but as wide a gulf separated them from the blacks as, say, separated Mr. Slaughter from the haughty family at Pine Mount.

"I don't know where to lodge you, lad, and that's a fact," observed the overseer, at last. "The cabins are all occupied. The only thing for you to do is to share with Nat Pet. Here, you"—beckoning up a little woolly-haired negro with his whip—"go down into the home field and fetch Nat up to me. Tell

him he's to come right now." Dismounting from his horse, he flung the bridle to another little negro, and bidding Anthony follow him, he made his way to one of the cabins and pushed the door open with his foot.

The cabin did not seem overburdened with furniture. Some blocks of wood did duty for chairs, while a pine-wood bench evidently served as a table. A greasy garment was hanging out of a pine-wood box, while an apology for a bed, with mattress and blankets of an indescribable dinginess, stood in one corner.

There was no glass in the opening that served as a window, although there were wooden shutters to pull-to at night, when the mists came in from the river. The floor was roughly planked and in the middle was a large, deep opening, a sort of miniature cellar, used for storing sweet potatoes.

In the open fire-place hickory logs were smouldering. Round about it were various cooking utensils. There was an enormous iron kettle, an iron pot, a hoe for baking corn-cakes, and an article in which most of the cookery of those days was performed—the famous three-legged skillet. On a pot-rack on the wall were a few wooden spoons and dishes.

Regarded as a place of abode the materials were not promising. Yet had the cabin belonged to a negro there would have been a fiddle or banjo on the walls, and in the evening, when the day's work was done, and the savoury supper partaken of, the inmates,

more often than not, would give themselves up to social enjoyment. They were an irresponsible care-free race, taking the little pleasures that came in their way and enjoying them like children. They would have been free from choice, of course, but not being so they did not let the fact depress them, unless they were unexpectedly brought up against some of the sterner aspects of their condition. At least they had no money troubles, or cares for the future to depress them. It was ole mistis's business to supply them with food and clothes, and to provide for them in sickness and old age. How she managed it was her own affair.

Taking a jack-knife from his pocket, Mr. Slaughter slashed the cords away from the boy's wrists. They had been bound so tightly that the flesh had risen over them. A raw red line marked the place where they had been. The boy winced a little as the cords came off. But the overseer had not been rough.

"Mr. Jeremiah Nepho—his mark," observed Mr. Slaughter, eyeing the raw wrists. "I didn't know he'd trussed you up as taut as that, lad. What had you done to put him out? Treated him to the same sort of sass you gave me?"

"He dared to raise his cane to me," Anthony told him shortly. "I flung it overboard for him, for his pains."

"Oh!" said Mr. Slaughter, as if considering. "Well, you'd better make up your mind to

leave those kind of manners behind you here, lad. Now I'm going to send you in some victuals from my own house to-day. As for a bed, you'll have to lie with Nat to-night. I'll fix you up with a mattress and blanket and perhaps a new 'suit of clothes to-morrow—I'll wager you won't be sorry to part from those on your back. And now, till Nat comes, suppose you take a little walk with me. I've something to show you that it won't do you any harm to see."

He turned on his heel as he spoke, Anthony following. Their way lay through the quarters. Only old women and a swarm of black children were to be seen. Every able-bodied man and woman, as well as the white indented servants, were at work, hoeing and ploughing the fields.

Dogs of every description, from noble deer-hounds to little yellow 'coon dogs had been about them, yelping and barking from the moment they entered in at the iron gates. But the dogs inside the big iron cage at which Mr. Slaughter finally halted his companion were a breed to themselves. Gaunt, fierce-looking creatures, they were a cross between a fox-hound and a blood-hound. When they recognised the overseer they gave tongue, running the length of their cage and leaping over one another, wild to be let loose.

"Ever seen that kind of dog before?" asked the overseer.

"No," said Anthony.

"We keep 'em to hunt down runaways!"

Mr. Slaughter informed him. "Stand over against me, now, and don't run from them, or the next thing you know they'll be at your throat. I'm going to let them out."

With his hand on the outside of the lock, he paused and looked at the boy questioningly.

"I shan't run from them," the latter reassured him.

Mr. Slaughter opened the door and the great beasts sprang out, pawing and nosing the newcomer, baying savagely meanwhile.

"Down, Nero! Steady! Steady, Hellion!" cried the overseer, his hand on his whip, his body alert for action.

The dogs continued to sniff round the boy, leaping up at intervals so that he could see into their bloodshot eyes and feel their hot breath on his cheeks.

"Not frightened, lad?" inquired the watchful overseer.

"Why should I be frightened?" asked Anthony. Putting his hand fearlessly on one of the great liver-coloured beasts he gave it a careless pat.

"You've a bold spirit," said the overseer. "And to tell you fairly, you've no occasion to be feared of them, 'longs I'm here. They know the feel of this whip of mine too well to touch you unless I set them on. But I've only to say, 'Sick him!' and they'd have you down before a cat could lick behind its ear!"

"Good dog," said Anthony, stroking Nero's head again.

The slight negligent attention he was paying

the overseer was an insult in itself. Shrewd Mr. Slaughter understood it as such, although he went on unmoved.

"While you're under me, lad," he said, "I intend to get a fair return in work for the money that's been paid for you. But if you're biddable and behave yourself, you won't have a hard time of it with me."

"Good dog!" said Anthony again. He was patting Hellion now.

Mr. Slaughter passed his whip-lash thoughtfully across his hand. "I'm the best hand to give a whipping on the Rappahannoc," he observed, "though I don't often do it and never without cause. I reckon Madam's plantation's managed with less of that kind of thing than any other hereabouts. But I know some overseers who'd have given you a taste of the cow-hide already—and for less than pretending not to listen to them like you're doing now."

Anthony kept his hand on Hellion's head, but he suddenly looked the overseer straight in the face. "Why do you show me the dogs?" he asked.

"Well, I'll tell you," answered the other deliberately. "It's because I know a lad of your spirit is going to take his breaking-in hard. I know too that, presently, the thought will come to you, as it comes to all of your sort, to run away. Now, those dogs have the keenest scent in nature. Once started, they never stop till they've run their quarry to earth. And they run for blood, mind you. It is to make you see for yourself that once they get

on your trail you've about as much chance of escape from them as a jay has from a sparrowhawk, that I showed them to you."

"It was thoughtful in you," said Anthony.

"I suppose you mean that for sass!" retorted the overseer. "But as it happens, it's no more than the truth. And I'm going to show you something else, too. Look yonder!" He pointed westwards with his hand towards the distant line of the Blue Ridge.

"Do you see those mountains?" he asked.

"Yes," said the boy.

"Well, if you attempted to escape that way the Indians would close in on you and rip the scalp from your head. What do you say to that?"

"That I must e'en not attempt to escape that way," answered Anthony.

"Sass, again," observed the overseer. "Look east."

Anthony looked east. There, bordering the plantation, was the stately Rappahannoc, sweeping between her red clay banks towards the sea. The masts of great ships could be seen on it in the distance.

"The punishment for hiding a runaway in out-going vessels is so severe that every captain has his ship scoured out before starting," the overseer informed him. "But say you did manage to skulk aboard and get back home again, would you be any better off with your bones rattling on a gibbet than you are here?"

Anthony did not reply. But at the word

"home" and at the cheerful prospect in front of him should he return there, which Mr. Slaughter's words had conjured up, his eyes had gone rather strained.

"There's no chance for you up north, either," Mr. Slaughter continued. "Maryland is so ill-affected towards runaways that it has patrols on its borders to herd 'em off like Indians or any other vermin. And once we got you back, do you know what we should do to you?"

"No," said Anthony.

Mr. Slaughter paused for just a moment. The boy's cheek, despite its emaciation, had so noble a curve that what he was about to say seemed incongruous.

"We should give you thirty-nine lashes, and brand you on the left cheek with the letter R—R for rogue, you know," he explained obligingly.

As the shameful words left the overseer's lips, Anthony's hand made the involuntary movement to his side that it had made once before that day. Shrewd Mr. Slaughter understood what it meant.

"No, lad," he observed, as though Anthony had actually spoken, "your sort aren't allowed to carry arms here, neither swords, nor what is of more importance to you—rifles. And that's why your last refuge down south is closed to you."

The boy's eyes followed the movement of his hand as it pointed southwards. There was something sinister in the swamp-like prospect revealed.

"Way down in Carolina they are not so particular about their company as Maryland," Mr. Slaughter explained. "You may even hear it called the 'refuge for runaways,' lad. But to reach it you would have to traverse Lone Swamp and Alligator Swamp, and after that the Great Dismal. The bloodhounds would have you back—what was left of you—long before you came to the borders of Lone Swamp. And even if they failed to get you, and you 'scaped the alligators, with no rifle you'd soon die of starvation, and the turkey-buzzards would pick your bones. There, lad, I hope I've made it plain to you."

"Monstrous plain!" Anthony told him. His attention was again on the dogs.

"What crime landed you here, lad?" asked the overseer suddenly.

"That's my business," answered the boy.

The overseer drew the whip-lash across his hand with the same suggestive movement as before, looking at Anthony all the while. The mockery of the smile he got back staggered him.

"Any other man but me would make you go supperless for that," he said slowly. "It's only because I've seen you so near death to-day that I don't. Here, get in, you brutes!" This last to the dogs, motioning them towards the cage.

If Mr. Slaughter had not used his whip on Anthony, he used it, and heavily, too, on the dogs, cowing them by his savage handling into returning to their cage. Securing the

door, he led the way back to the cabin which Anthony was to share with Nathaniel Pet.

On the way he stopped another of the little shirt-clad negroes with whom the whole place was overrun.

"Step up lively to my house," he ordered. "Tell Aunt Molly she's to send down some corn bread and cold bacon and—and—a can of buttermilk to Nat's cabin."

The inky Mercury touched his inky locks, and sped on his errand. When they reached the cabin Nat was waiting for them outside it.

CHAPTER VII

NATHANIEL PET

Nat Pet was about Anthony's own age. He had a stunted, thick-set figure, and his face, not a prepossessing one to start with, was slightly pock-marked. He had a wide mouth, and little cunning eyes set deep in his head. Regarded as a room-mate, one might have imagined a more pleasing apparition.

"I've put this new hand here to share your cabin, Nat," Mr. Slaughter told him shortly.

Nat lifted a greasy hat and made the overseer a servile bow. He was all submission outwardly, but a sidewise look he threw at Anthony managed to convey to the latter that the news held no joy for him. A scrutiny of Anthony's personal appearance apparently strengthened his objections.

"I'll give him to-day to recover of the voyage—and other things," observed Mr. Slaughter. "But see that he's up and in the field when I blow the second horn to-morrow. If he's not, I'll settle with you for it."

"Yes, sir," answered Nat humbly. But what he thought of the justice of the arrangement might be gathered from the scowl he threw at Anthony.

"I can't fix him up a bed to-day," continued the overseer. He was apparently going to repeat his previous mandate that the two boys should share the same couch, when happening to notice the narrow dimensions of the latter he changed his mind. "It won't do a healthy young cub like you any harm to lie on the ground for once," he said. "Give him up your bed, to-night, rascal, d'ye hear?"

"Yes, sir," answered Nat, but not even Mr. Slaughter could have supposed from his manner this time that he considered the plan a pleasing one. But after a year's experience of Mr. Slaughter's methods he knew better than to make any outward objection. Still, to relieve his feelings he put out his tongue at Anthony.

He had carefully turned away from Mr. Slaughter before performing the ceremony. But the overseer had eyes at the back of his head. "Here, none of that, you young scamp!" he exclaimed. "If I hear of you as much as laying a finger on him to-night, I'll——" He did not finish his threat. He had no need to, apparently. From Nat's protestations Anthony was evidently going to be as safe in his cabin as a young 'possum in its mother's pouch.

At this moment the black Mercury appeared on the scene with some cold corn bread and bacon, and a pewter can filled with butter-milk. Mr. Slaughter motioned for him to put them down on the pine-wood bench before Anthony.

"When did you have your last meal, lad?" he asked the latter.

"Last night," the boy told him.

"And I'll wager it was a thin one," said the overseer. "Still, if you get down that corn-pone and bacon and sup up that buttermilk, you'll have nothing to rail at."

In spite of his experiences on board-ship, Anthony looked involuntarily at the black boy as though he expected him to produce some further essentials to a meal beyond the bare provisions. Mr. Slaughter, leaning up against the door, watching him, appeared slightly amused.

"Fingers were made before knives, lad," he hinted.

Without making any reply, Anthony fell upon the provisions before him, using the primitive utensils the overseer had suggested. It was significant that Mr. Slaughter had said knives instead of forks. Forks were still a great luxury in those days, only used by the quality. Even then, they were small, two-pronged affairs that must have been very difficult to eat with. Their deficiencies were supplemented by numerous table-napkins. One of Joyce Rolleston's tasks from her babyhood almost had been to embroider the napkins—fine damask napkins that Madam affected—with the initials and arms of her race.

Anthony must have been famished. But he did not fall upon the food ravenously, as another might have done in his place, eating

them instead with the control of a man. The contrast of his delicacy of eating and his clothes and surroundings tickled Mr. Slaughter.

"Is there anything else you'd be pleased to require, my fine gentleman?" he asked, sarcastically.

"Yes, soap," answered Anthony promptly.

Mr. Slaughter gazed at him open-mouthed. "You've some assurance, lad!" he observed at last. He looked the boy over again as though he could not have heard aright. "Maybe you think you'll get it?" he then observed.

Anthony considered the speaker, himself, before replying. Then he said, "Yes," in a perfectly matter-of-fact and steady way.

"What are you standing there for, you lazy rascal?" exclaimed the overseer, wheeling round on Nat. "Get back to your work, or I'll send you to it with a flea in your ear."

Nat went regretfully. Anthony's request had paralyzed him even more than it had done the overseer, and it would have given him the profoundest satisfaction to have seen the newcomer taught his place. He trailed back to the field as slowly as he could, hoping all the time to hear the crack of Mr. Slaughter's whip within the cabin. He was not gratified.

Mr. Slaughter had ceased to look humorous. "I've so much to learn you, lad, that I don't know where to start in," he said, with a frown. "You don't suppose Madam imports

soap for the likes of you, do you? Sand or yellow clay, that you can get yourself from the river, is all that's becoming to your station. I don't say I won't let you have a piece to-night, but it's for the last time, mind."

Mr. Slaughter departed, giving the crazy wooden door an angry slam. And though he actually did send down a negro with the soap, it was with a half laugh at himself for doing so. But, after all, he had used the boy hardly to-day, and plantation discipline would soon make him haul in his horns.

Left to himself, Anthony took down the heavy kettle—it weighed at least fifteen pounds—and went to the door.

"Here, Sambo, how shall I come by some water?" he asked one of the little negroes playing outside it.

The little darkey shied off like a frightened animal at the sound of his voice. He stood at a little distance scrutinizing his questioner, hesitating whether to answer or whether to take to his little black heels. The gaunt newcomer smiled at him and all at once the child lost his fear, grinning from ear to ear in the most friendly way.

"De well 'way down dar, sah," he explained, adding obligingly, "I'se gwine holp yo' h'ist de bucket, sah!"

Following his bare-footed, bare-headed, shirt-clad guide, Anthony made his way to the well. A little grey animal, beautifully marked, which was playing about it, scuttled off at their approach.

Anthony's new found friend not only helped him to "h'ist" the bucket and pour its contents into the kettle, but also assisted him to "tote" back the latter to the cabin, grinning with pleasure when the latter thanked him, until every shining ivory in his head was laid bare. Shutting the door on him, to his evident disappointment, Anthony poked the logs to a blaze and heating the water in the kettle, performed some much-needed ablutions. By the time he had finished them it was sundown, and the workers were returning from the fields.

In the hour that elapsed since his departure from the cabin, Nat's rage against its new occupant had been steadily growing. To begin with, it was his cabin and he didn't want to share it with anybody. There were too many little practices in which he indulged at night—practices which kept his board liberally supplied both with partridge and pork—to render the presence of a second person, who might conceivably act as a spy, at all desirable. And for another thing, if he was to have a companion at all he would have liked one who would have been his mate. Brief as his inspection of Anthony had been, he found a difficulty in imagining him in this rôle.

In spite of Mr. Slaughter's adjurations he had every intention of getting even with this interloper, who, not content with sharing his cabin, was also going to turn him out of his bed. The fact that he looked scarcely able to stand upright would render the feat all the easier to accomplish. True, he might "tell

on" the aggressor. But Master Nat fancied he knew ways of intimidating him from doing anything of the sort.

He opened the door with a jeer on his lips. It was a stroke of wit he had been preparing all the way up from the fields.

"Well, Smutty-face?" he cried. "Have you fell a-cryin' yet for that there soap?"

Anthony Shipley looked up at him sharply. The surprising difference in his appearance startled the youth.

"Why, you don't mean to say you've gotten it, after all!" he exclaimed, his face falling

Anthony turned away without troubling himself to reply. But the sight of a cake of soap on the pot-rack, an article which had never been inside the cabin since Nat's own tenancy of it, filled the latter's soul with envy. He broke out in a string of foul abuse against its owner.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head," Anthony warned him.

He was sitting on one of the wooden benches in front of the logs. His face, freed from the grimes of the voyage, looked frightfully thin, almost like the face of a corpse, indeed, in its deadly whiteness. This was a person whose threats it was safe to disregard. Nat merely laughed at the warning, and though he stopped his revilings it was only because he had other things to attend to.

First he took out the corn he had just ground at the mill, kneaded it with water into flat cakes and placed these on the hoe over the

logs. He then produced a couple of squirrels, and skinning them as one would a rabbit, soon had them cooking in the iron pot together with slices of superb bacon and appetising sweet potatoes. Every now and then he added a pinch of salt from a gourd, smiling maliciously the while. It struck him as a peculiarly finished form of revenge to prepare this particularly savoury meal and eat it before Anthony's face without offering him any. Anthony had had his corn pone and bacon, of course. But who could compare such every-day fare with a feast such as this!

He lifted the lid of the iron pot more often than he need have done to let the appetising odours ascend in Anthony's direction. He had rehearsed the scene all the way home. However hard the latter begged, he meant to refuse him even a mouthful.

"A rare and good stew this," he said aloud, tasting it from a wooden spoon, and smacking his lips.

Then he took the corn-cakes from the hoe. The delicious wholesome fragrance of hot bread mixed with the more savoury odours of the stew.

"Like hoe-cakes?" he then enquired.

Anthony, sitting on the bench with his tired head on his hand, made no reply.

Nat looked disappointed. Without the reply in the affirmative he had expected, a repartee which he had thought out with great pains to himself, missed half its point.

He made it all the same though. "Then see me eat 'em," he observed, and bolted one bodily. After which, he poured the contents of the pot into a wooden dish and ate it with gusto.

He could not understand, though, why it did not occur to the other boy to ask him for any. It robbed his refusal to do so of half its piquancy.

"I ain't going to give you a mossel—strike me ugly if I do!" he observed, at last, his wicked little eyes waiting to gloat over the other's disappointment. But the face which had kept steady while Mr. Slaughter talked about brandings did not change now.

Nat scooped out a particularly delicate portion of squirrel and held it within arm's length of Anthony Shipley's nose. "Smell it!" he ordered. "But don't think I'm a-going to give you any. If you was to go down on your bended knees I wouldn't!"

Anthony Shipley had looked up involuntarily as the other raised his arm. And for the first time he saw that the hand holding the spoon in his direction was the same as that of the convict to whom he had been chained. In its palm the mark that proclaimed him rogue and felon had been branded deep. Till the grave itself, Newgate would claim him for her own.

As he looked, a sudden and awful disgust filled Anthony's eyes. He himself had stood in the dock, had heard the judge pronounce his sentence, had seen the look of relief on the

face of the Jesuit who had brought it about. He had come out of the horrors of his position alive. But they had bitten deep into his heart. And in some unaccountable way the degradation of his state seemed focussed in the branded hand of the boy for whom the world now considered him fit company. If Nat's hand had been a snake he could not have looked at it with more horror and abhorrence.

Nat himself, following his gaze, looked down at his hand almost stupidly. For the moment he felt as though something must have happened to it. He had become so accustomed to the appearance of the scar, that it had ceased to have any significance to him. The actual branding had been inexpressibly painful, of course, and he had writhed and screamed under the torture of it, but now that the skin had hardened and the wounds had become healed, he scarcely gave the mark a thought. Perhaps nothing in all his dull life had ever astonished him so profoundly as Anthony's loathing glance at it.

He dropped the spoon into the pot again. He said no word more about refusing to share his supper with the newcomer. He was not stupid, and he realised—with the glance he had just caught to quicken his intelligence he couldn't help realising—that the boy before him would have perished rather than receive anything his hand had touched. He then poured forth a flood of the vile oaths Newgate had made him acquainted with, for two

minutes at a stretch, without repeating himself once.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head," the other warned him again.

With a snarl at him Nat finished his supper, and went out to pour his wrongs into the ears of some of the worst characters on the plantation, who were his especial cronies. These worthies were as little likely to find Anthony to their taste as Nat himself. Between them they ought to find many ways of bringing his proud spirit into subjection.

Nat came back about ten o'clock. As he entered the door he threw a sudden jealous glance at his bed, half expecting to see a fair head on the greasy pillow. But Anthony sat on the bench where he had left him staring into the fire.

Nat had suggested to his cronies that they should come back and make a united attack on the cuckoo who was at present occupying his nest. But as he had been incautious enough to preface his narrative with a description of the overseer's unheard-of favours in the way of soap and the like, the others prudently decided to defer the dressing-down of which, according to Nat, Anthony stood in such arrant need—until Mr. Slaughter had ceased to interest himself in him.

Their caution had had a certain effect on Nat himself. Before he went out he had decided to retain his bed, at all costs, while finding some means of making Anthony keep silence on the subject to Mr. Slaughter. Now, after

listening to his friends and with a saving memory of the overseer's shrewd eyes and heavy hand, he had decided that direct disobedience to his orders was more than he dare commit himself to. But if looks could kill, the one he directed at Anthony now would have laid the other low.

"You're bound to have my bed, I suppose, although I take it very ill," he grumbled. "But you're not going to have the blankets too, and so I tell you."

"Keep your bed!" answered Anthony wearily.

"Oh, ay! And have you blabbing about it to Mr. Slaughter in the morning!" retorted the other derisively.

"I shall say naught about it," Anthony assured him. "But should Mr. Slaughter question me I shall tell him that I would choose the river bed rather than lie on a couch that such as you have defiled."

Nat's new room-mate could not be called a garrulous person. But when he did open his mouth he seemed to affect a certain plainness of speech.

"I hate you!" said Nat, simply but fervently.

Anthony shrugged his shoulder with an indifference that maddened the other.

"I suppose that means you've no regard to what I feel about you, anyways," he raged. "But I lay I'll make you mind before I've done with you, you puffed-up coxcomb. I'll disable you yet, for all you've managed to

sneak yourself into Mr. Slaughter's good graces."

The gentleman whom Mr. Slaughter had raced at his saddle-bow until the breath was all but out of his body, condescended to show a faint surprise at the last statement.

"As for choosing the river bed, there mayn't be much choice about it for you," continued Nat darkly. "There's naught I should like better than to choke you in the mud for crowding up my cabin, and using my things."

"I don't want your things, fool," Anthony told him. He rose up as he spoke, wearily, but with some determination. "All I want is for you to keep your distance. Remove your things, an you will, to the side of the cabin where your bed is. They will be safe enough from me, in all conscience!"

As safe as though they belonged to a leper, apparently, to judge by his expression. But Nat found the arrangement too much to his liking to waste time in objecting to the manner in which it was made. He promptly took Anthony at his word, gathering up his possessions in jealous haste, like an angry dog guarding a bone from another one.

He had pitifully little to take, really. The wooden box, the pine-wood bench, the rude seats, the pot-rack with its few articles of crockery, and a gourd or two made up the sum of his household gods. He left the cooking utensils where they were about the fireplace.

Anthony, reserving the block of wood on which he had been sitting, watched his proceedings impassively. When they were finished he sat down again and continued to stare into the fire.

The cold night wind came in from the spaces between the logs. A thin dampish vapour had been gradually creeping in the room too. It was the fog from the river. Anthony's teeth chattered a little. It was the premonitory sign of the ague the river fogs brought with them.

Nat disrobed himself of his grey garments and dropped among his greyer blankets. Propped on his flock pillow he lay and stared with ever mounting resentment on the still figure by the fire.

"Curse you!" he said by way of making his sentiments fully known.

He might have been talking to the winds for any impression he made.

"Curse you!" said Nat again, in order that there might be no mistake.

Then the other did turn his head. "I've bidden you twice already to keep a civil tongue in your head," he said sternly. "I shall give you no third warning. Better be warned in time."

Nat laughed shrilly. "Why, what can you do, you white, puking thing?" he demanded, following up the question by a string of oaths of a vileness beyond description.

The tired boy at the fireside heaved himself to his feet. Nat instinctively assumed

an attitude of defence. But he might have spared himself the trouble. All Anthony did was to lift up the wooden top of the tiny cellar.

"Here, quit that!" cried Nat angrily. "Those potatoes down there ain't none of yours."

Anthony placed the lid to the cellar very deliberately on the ground beside him. In his eagerness to protect his property from Anthony's supposed designs upon it, Nat had relaxed his guard. The next instant Anthony was upon him.

Anthony might be the white puking thing Nat considered him, but the lean wrists, which still showed the marks of the cord, answered to the call their owner made on their strength. They had seized Nat by his full throat, had taken him at a rush over the half dozen feet of flooring that separated the bed from the cellar and had toppled him inside the latter before the victim himself had realised what was happening. Before he could recover from his astonishment, the lid was on the top of the cellar and Anthony was on the top of the lid, his head resting on his hand, his calm eyes gazing into the fire as before.

A clamour of muffled oaths came up from below and the lid oscillated up and down in Nat's wild efforts to dislodge its occupant. But the tiny dimensions of his prison, which prevented him from getting any real purchase for his pushes, made it no very difficult matter for Anthony to keep him there at his pleasure.

It was deadlly cold in the cellar among the potatoes. The damp clammy earth struck a chill to Nat's very bones. And suppose this silent jailer of his, who might have been a denizen from another world, for any power Nat had of understanding him, meant to keep him there all night? He grew frenzied at the thought and tried to thrust up the lid with his head. But even this admirably designed weapon for his purpose proved of no avail.

Nat was not imaginative, but the pitchy darkness became full of terrors for him. A potato moved under his foot and he shrieked aloud. The rattlesnakes he knew had just begun to creep out of their winter quarters. If one should bite him down there, helpless as he was, he could do nothing. At the thought he broke into a fresh torrent of oaths and screams and revilings. But the boy with the hard mouth and the harder eyes kept his seat on the top of the lid unmoved. It was only when the oaths had changed into beseechings and moanings to be let up that he moved his position and lifted the lid.

"Get up!" he said.

Nat got up, half dead with cold, his teeth chattering.

Anthony put on another log. "Come here," he ordered.

He might have been talking to a dog but Nat was too cowed for the moment not to obey.

"When you've made answer to one or two questions I'm going to put to you, you can get

back to bed," Anthony told him. "How does one come by a rifle here?"

"They don't suffer gallows-birds like you to have one," Nat told him with malicious satisfaction.

"I know that," returned the other curtly. "What I asked you was how one came by one?"

"You *can't* come by one, I tell you—it's agin the law!" Nat persisted.

"How had you those squirrels to-night, then?" The question came as swiftly as the swoop of an owl on its prey.

"Chunked 'em—trapped 'em, I mean," Nat was beginning. Anthony glanced in the direction of the cellar and he ended sullenly, "Mr. Gookin at the store will let you have one if you pay him his charges and keep it close."

"Stay where you are," said Anthony sharply, as Nat made a movement to return to his couch. "How do you get the money to pay Mr. Gookin his charges?"

"The quality sometimes bestow bounties on you for holding their horses or waiting on them," answered Nat, as though the words were being screwed out of him. "Or if you have a mind to work on Saturday Mr. Slaughter will pay you for it. Or you can catch fish and sell them to the Great House. Or if you don't eat all your 'lowance of corn Madam will buy it back from you."

His teeth were chattering so by this time that he could hardly speak. If Anthony had

intended to question him further he changed his mind as he heard.

"Here, get back to bed with you," he said, turning away.

Nat accepted the permission with a scowl. He lay awake for a long time, getting warm again and gathering venom. He was only waiting until Anthony fell asleep to be revenged on him. On the precise form which his revenge was to take he had not yet decided.

His ever-present dread of the overseer kept him from going to the lengths he would have liked, even in his thoughts. Still, once he got his hand round Anthony's throat he might make life sufficiently uncomfortable for him to teach him to refrain in future from tumbling other people down potato cellars.

Anthony had not stirred for more than an hour when Nat at last crept out of bed towards him.

The firelight from the smouldering logs which showed him how still the other was made him feel that all was safe. He crept nearer on stealthy, bare feet. He stooped over the motionless figure.

Blue eyes—keen as those of a lynx—watching him from the face of the supposed sleeper, stopped him and sent him cowering back to bed.

He waited for a long time for the words of denunciation he expected Anthony to speak. But the latter did not trouble to utter so much

as a syllable. The contemptuous silence daunted Nat more effectually than any words could have done.

Outside, the howl of a wolf in the forest made night hideous. Inside, Anthony kept his lonely vigil against a scarcely less deadly foe. But Nat did not molest him again that night.

CHAPTER VIII

A DAY IN THE FIELDS

The light was only just creeping up over the hills when the first blast of the overseer's horn made itself heard. Nat awoke from sleep with a discontented grunt. The sight of Anthony reminded him of his wrongs, and he bestowed a vicious scowl on him by way of a morning greeting.

Anthony had opened both shutters and door and stood beside the latter looking out. The air was chill and raw. The mist from the river was like a fine rain on his face. The dew was so heavy that when he stepped out into the little garden patch his worn shoes were wetted through.

"Here, none of your skulking off!" cried Nat. "Mr. Slaughter said as how you was to be ready to be in the field at the second sound of the horn. He said he'd settle with me for it, if you wasn't."

"I shall be there," Anthony told him.

With the big kettle in his hand he strode off to the well. Signs of life were beginning to appear on all sides of him. Cows were lowing and watchdogs barking. A rooster on his neighbour's fence began to crow lustily and

from every cabin the blue smoke was already ascending.

Nat kept an uneasy eye on him from the door till he returned. Distinctly unjust as it was of Mr. Slaughter to have made him this new boy's keeper, the trust was one which he dared not disregard. Still, a mild cause for rejoicing lay in the fact that Anthony had kept the fire up all night, as the re-lighting it in the morning with flint and steel was always a delicate and patience-trying business.

When the wanderer returned Nat eyed the kettle in his hand with deep resentment. "I thought we wasn't going to share things," he muttered.

"We're not," Anthony told him. With his foot he carelessly kicked over the various cooking utensils that stood about the fireplace, the iron pot, the skillet, and the hoe, into Nat's division of the cabin. "Those are yours," he said. "I take this for my own use. See that you don't touch it!"

Considering how well he was coming off in the apportionment, Nat might have looked more grateful than he did. He kept up a gloomy silence until the sight of Anthony's hand going in the direction of the soap which had previously caused him such heartburning, widened his eyes. "Why, you washed yourself yester' e'en!" he exclaimed.

His own toilet, which did not include such a superfluous detail as washing at all, was soon finished, and he bestirred himself to get his breakfast. Hoe cakes were soon baking on

the logs, and with these and a couple of eggs he had abstracted from Madam's hen-roost the day before, he made a substantial meal before the other boy's eyes. As he bolted the last mouthful, the horn sounded for the second time.

At the sound every cabin door was flung open as if by magic. A crowd of field hands, white indented male servants, and black men and women, stood ready to march to the field. The overseer, burly and vigilant as ever, his long whip with its six feet of lash hanging over his shoulder, was soon among them bidding some feed the stock and others milk the cows, and marching the rest to the hoeing. Anthony was among those who were marched to the hoeing. From the next cabin to his own a young mulatto woman with a gentle, sad face ran out quickly, a baby in her arms, and joined them. This was "Field Cynthia," so called to distinguish her from "House Cynthia," who was Madam's woman.

Both the tobacco and the corn, the only two crops cultivated on Madam's estate, were planted in May. But whole acres of ground had to be hoed in readiness. The hand hoe was much more generally used at this time than the plough, as so many roots and stumps of trees were still left in the ground. The tobacco seeds were at present lying warm under brushwood in the ground that had been cleared for them in the winter. Later on the young plants would be removed for planting in the fields which Anthony and his companions were now about to work up.

"Ever handled a hoe before, lad?" Mr. Slaughter asked his new hand.

"No," answered Anthony.

"Go, get him one from the barn," the overseer ordered Nat.

Nat, who in a general way would have resented being sent an errand on Anthony's behalf, went very willingly on this one. He also chose out the heaviest hoe he could find. It was piquant to imagine such an instrument in what he resentfully called Anthony's "fine gentleman" hands.

Mr. Slaughter gave rather an odd look at the said hands, as he put the big, clumsy tool into them. But he only said in his matter-of-fact way, "You must work in a line, side by side with the rest, lad, and you must keep up with the hand in the front row. Hast had any breakfast?"

"No," said the boy.

The overseer turned angrily on Nat. "Why did you not give him some of yours, you greedy swine?" he demanded.

"Because he did not press me for any, sir," answered Nat, with truth. "And if you please, Mr. Slaughter, he tried to murder me last night. Flung me down the potato cellar, he did, and kept me there the best part of the night, till I near took my death of the cold."

The overseer turned his shrewd glance on Anthony. "Why did'st do that, lad?" he asked grimly, without questioning the truth of the statement.

"For his good!" answered Anthony as grimly back again.

"Well, don't do it again!" the overseer warned him. "For if you'd really chilled him and made him unfit for his work to-day, you and me'd have to have had a reckoning."

"Please, Mr. Slaughter, aren't you going to do anything to him for using me like that?" whined Nat.

"Well, seeing as he did it for your good, Nat, I don't know as I am," returned the overseer dryly. "But I'll pay a surprise visit to your cabin one of these fine nights, and if I find he's had to put you in the potato cellar again there's *one* of you I'll do something to! There, lad, you can get a good night's rest to-night!" he said abruptly to Anthony, after watching the effect of his words on Nat's quailing face.

"I thank you!" said Anthony.

The overseer glanced sharply down. But into the tired eyes into which he was looking, he for once found no "sass."

Mr. Slaughter was a busy man and had something better to do than to worry himself over the fact that one of his field hands looked as though he was going to drop in his furrow. But as he passed down the rows from time to time, exhorting, directing, chiding, or encouraging, his eye always went towards the same lean figure. As he expected, Anthony was keeping up with the negro in the front row.

These field workers were not the only ones

astir. The quality, too, were up and doing, it seemed. The hunter's horn came down to the hoers, followed by the music of the hounds. Anthony, working in his line, almost fancied he could hear the "Hip, hallo!" of the huntsman as he cheered them on, and his blood quickened a little at the old familiar sounds.

The mists from the river had begun to roll away. The atmosphere, from being damp and cold, had become humid. When the sun was fairly up it became unpleasantly warm. Anthony's head was aching as it had never ached before in his life and the heavy hoe was finding out the quick in his unaccustomed hands. But it was well for him that he had come at this time of the year instead of later. Men whose "seasoning" came to them in the parched heats of July and August died off like flies.

After Anthony had been working an eternity of weary hours, a clatter of hoofs roused his attention. As chance would have it he had come almost to the end of his row and this had brought him quite close to the bridle path leading from the plantation to the pine woods. He was thus in an excellent position to see Miss Joyce Rolleston riding Archduke under the escort of Mr. Fauce of Greenbriars.

Miss Rolleston was not in buckskins, but in a fine flowing habit of green cloth that Madam had had sent over for her from England. From under her beaver hat with its floating sable plume her grey eyes were shining like stars. She sat the most famous

horse in all Virginia as lightly as a bird. And a gallant figure in his smart riding suit and polished top boots was Mr. Fauce as he kept pace at her side. Miss Rolleston, holding Archduke in easiest mastery, was laughing with a child's pleasure at an unexpected outing, as she passed. Anthony turned back again to his hoeing.

Working in the row beside him was "Field Cynthia" with her baby at her back. A soft and delightful little brown ball was the baby, as glossy as a chestnut, with eyes as bright as a squirrel's.

The child had slept during the earlier part of the morning. When it woke up it was a little fretful. The mother tried to soothe it, singing to it as she hoed about the doings of the "ole hare" and the 'possum. But the baby resented her working at all, and wanting her undivided attention, tried to pull her face round to its own with its little pudgy brown hands.

"Dere, dere, dere, mah lil' picanniny lub!" cried Field Cynthia, kissing it hungrily. "Yo' des wait, mah honey, honey, honey, till de dinner hour, an' den mammy gwine play wid her baby fer sho.' How yo' spose I'se gwine get froo wid mah task wid yo' a-foolin' dat ar way?"

The task in question being a matter of profound indifference to the baby, it broke into an injured cry.

Anthony snapped his fingers at it. The little thing paused in the midst of a howl to

regard him gravely. Then its face broke into one nut-brown dimple, and it murmured "A-goo!" in just the same sort of way that a white baby would have done if it had condescended to accept a stranger's advances.

The mother smiled up at Anthony gratefully. "Tank oo, massa," she said. "Dat chile des a-pinin fer som'un ter play wid."

"Don't you find it vastly fatiguing to work with him on your back? Couldn't you leave him at home?" asked Anthony in the same grave, courteous voice in which he had spoken to Madam the day before.

"Dat I could, massa," answered the woman. "Dey is plenty ole women kep at de Quarters fo' to mind de chillen. But 'pears like I wrop up in dat baby, an' kain't bar it outen mah sight. He all I got, sah!"

"But why don't you put it down on the ground while you work?" asked Anthony.

"'Case ob de snakes, massa," Field Cynthia told him. "Some ob de women who tote dere babies round, lay dem ober 'gainst de hedgerow, an' gib dem straws an' sich to play wid. But 'pears like I'se too skeered. De Lawd knows what I gwine do, ef a black snake coil hisse'f 'bout dis peart lil' face! An' Mis' Joyce she done get round Massa Slaughter fo' to say nuffin 'bout it, ef I not allus able to keep up wid de ress. She know dis baby all I got."

"Is your husband dead?" asked Anthony, in involuntary response to the note of mystery in the woman's voice.

Field Cynthia gave him a wild look—a hunted look almost. “No, sah, he not dead, sah,” she answered, and went on with her hoeing in constrained silence.

The overseer’s horn sounded and everyone laid down their hoes. It was noon-day. Anthony straightened his bent back. There was to be an hour—one whole hour—of cessation from toil for him.

A cart appeared in the field, drawn by bullocks. It contained the dinner for the hands—as much corn pone as they could eat, and two salted herrings a-piece and good spring water. The provisions were portioned out to them by the drivers—negro officials under the overseer—and were eaten with hearty appetite.

His meal finished, Anthony sat under the hedgerow and observed his fellow-workers.

Both whites and blacks were dressed very much alike in winter suits of linsey which they would soon be exchanging for summer linens. There were no Indians, Indian slavery having been abolished by law more than twenty years ago. The white indented servants appeared to belong to the class of the ordinary English agricultural labourer, though, if anything, of a slightly superior order. There were few faces so depraved as Nat’s, although Anthony looked in vain among them all for one which, like his own, bore the stamp of breed.

Though everyone was relaxing in the easiest attitudes they could attain against the

fences, his own cruel weariness did not seem to be general, Anthony noticed. It was the sort of work they were all accustomed to, and Madam saw that they were not over-driven. Besides which, and as is the way with all forced labour, neither negro nor indentured servant ever exerted himself to the full limit of his powers.

In an hour's time the horn was sounded again and everyone took up their hoes. The sun's rays were beating down on Anthony's uncovered head when Mr. Slaughter came up to him again. In his hand was a new broad-brimmed felt hat which he had just sent one of the drivers to his house to obtain.

"So you've kept up, lad," he said, in briefest comment on Anthony's work. "Well, here's something to protect your head with. We can't have Madam's property getting sun-stroke."

Towards three o'clock there came an interruption. Tudor Rolleston and young Mr. Beverley returning from the hunt took the fields on their way. It had been the best run of the year and the two young gentlemen were in high spirits. In their fringed hunting shirts, with bugles slung over their shoulders and firearms stuck in their belts, they rode their spirited horses at a good pace, their negro boys galloping behind them. It was not the least part of Tudor's pride that in Ephra'm he possessed the handsomest groom on the Rappahannoc.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Slaughter," said

Tudor, with affable condescension. "Everything going on well here?"

Madam was breeding Tudor up to take an intelligent interest in the working of the plantation, which would one day be his own, and Mr. Slaughter had his orders to allow him a certain share in its management.

"As well as we've a right to expect, sir," answered the overseer. "We're short-handed, as I've said before, and we shall have a rare job to get the fields ready against the planting. But we'll make out, all the same."

"What have you done with the new hand?" asked Tudor, with some of yesterday's resentment still in his voice.

"I've put him to the hoeing," answered Mr. Slaughter, apparently without interest in the subject.

"Where is the rascal?" asked Tudor.

Mr. Slaughter looked round vaguely. "Now where can he be?" he said, scratching his head in the effort to remember. Considering that less than an hour ago he had been actually inspecting the new hand's work, his lapse from memory was, to say the least of it, curious.

"He way down dar, sah," put in a driver who had overheard, pointing with his finger in Anthony's direction. He grinned with pleasure at the assistance he had been able to render, and wondered that Mr. Slaughter did not seem more appreciative of it.

Tudor put his horse in motion. He did not invite Mr. Slaughter to accompany him, but

the latter seemed to take the permission for granted. At any rate, he followed and at a quick pace too.

Down the rows, between the lines of bending backs went young Massa, Mr. Beverley and the overseer in his wake. Tudor knew all the hands personally and had a careless greeting to bestow on the more favoured ones. "Hullo, Quambo! Out of my way, Joe! Pete, you lazy scamp, can't you move a hoe quicker than that?" he cried, getting submissive grins back in return.

Anthony's back was bent to his work like the others. His fine-gentleman hands were bleeding in places, though the strokes of his hoe fell evenly.

He heard the rattle of hoofs behind him. But Mr. Slaughter had been passing and re-passing on horseback at intervals all day long and he did not turn his head. The next thing he knew was that the soft felt hat with which the overseer had provided him was being knocked from his head. Glancing up in startled surprise, he found that the operation had been performed by the butt end of Tudor's hunting-crop.

"Learn to uncover, in future, rascal, when your master is by," Tudor told him.

"Perhaps the poor wretch had no knowledge of your approach," suggested young Mr. Beverley, good-naturedly.

"Well, that should make him sensible of it!" Tudor retorted.

The "poor wretch" himself calmly stooped

for his hat. He stood, but no longer with a bent back, in front of them, quietly brushing off the mud the felt had acquired in its descent.

"And how has the fellow been behaving himself, Mr. Slaughter?" asked Tudor importantly. "Has he given you any more trouble since yesterday?"

"No, sir," answered the overseer. "I've naught to complain of him."

Tudor's face fell involuntarily. "Has he been diligent at his task?" he repeated.

"He's kept up with his line, sir," answered the impassive Mr. Slaughter.

Tudor looked slightly nonplussed. "Well, see you keep him in proper subjection, Mr. Slaughter," he said at last, "and if he discovers any further unruliness of temper I'll undertake to correct it."

The Brown Baby on Field Cynthia's back was distinctly pleased with the equestrian show that it evidently considered was being provided for its especial benefit. It looked at the prancing horses and the picturesquely-attired gentlemen with admiration. Then it turned to share its appreciation of them with Anthony.

"A-goo!" it observed conversationally.

Anthony snapped his fingers at it in the friendliest way, and the nice smile he gave it lit up his face.

Each of the three onlookers started. The trifling action was nothing in itself, but it seemed to give the boy who had made it the mastery of the situation. He had stood quietly

brushing the mud from the hat which Tudor's rude action had displaced with an inscrutable face. And for all answer to the other's threats he had turned in responsive play to the child of the slave woman at his side. It seemed to make the threats of no more account than straws in the wind. Regarded as "sass" it was distinctly effective. Young Mr. Beverley caught himself considering it a good deal as he rode home. What Tudor thought about it might be gathered from the fierce gnawing of his under-lip.

At sundown the overseer gave the order for them to leave off work and go home. Anthony's first day on a Virginian tobacco field was over.

Mr. Slaughter had sent a mattress and a couple of clean, if coarse, blankets to his cabin earlier in the day, together with a peck of corn—his allowance for the week—sweet potatoes, herrings and uncooked bacon. Cynthia went with him to the mill, and showed him how to grind his corn.

Towards the negroes he encountered there the new hand had a grave gentleness of manner that won him an instinctive answering politeness. Profound as was the negroes' contempt as a rule for "po' whites" it never extended to Anthony. He had "quality ways," whatever adverse fate might have brought him down to their lowly level, and not one of them but gave him the ready deference they accorded to Tudor himself, furious as that youth would have been had he known it.

The indented white servants did not molest him. With the unerring instinct of their class, they, too, knew him for "quality," though he gave himself no airs. A thousand inherited instincts separated him from them, but though they would never be cordial, they were very far from being hostile. The baser spirits among them—Nat's friends—although they had heard Tudor rating him in the field, knew better than to lay a finger on him, although how they had come by the notion that the grim overseer had a weakness for the boy whom he had nearly killed the day before, they would have found it difficult to say.

Cynthia offered to bake his hoe-cakes and bacon and potatoes along with her own, an offer which Anthony gratefully accepted. When she ran in with a piping hot meal on one of her own wooden dishes, and Nat noticed that she had been at the trouble to give an extra relish to the potatoes by browning them in the bacon-fat, he scowled. He was about to scowl audibly when Anthony, glancing in his direction, stopped the words on his tongue.

Anthony ate his meal in silence. When it was finished, he said without any preamble, "Where is Mr. Gookin's store?"

"Outside the plantation, and over against the creek," answered Nat, adding with malicious satisfaction, "But you won't be able to go there, because you haven't got a permit."

"How do you go there—when you haven't got a permit?" asked Anthony.

Nat wriggled. Then Anthony keeping his eyes on him, he said sullenly,

"I wait till it gets dark."

Anthony also waited until it got dark.

Mr. Gookin's store was the only place approaching a shop on the Rappahannoc. In their hatred of towns, the Virginians steadily discouraged anything of the kind. Such articles as could not be produced on the plantations were sent out to them by their merchants in England. Still, the arrangement was attended by many inconveniences, as can be imagined, and Mr. Gookin's barn-like building, which was situated not far from Madam's plantation, was often a great boon to the planters. Mr. Gookin's trade and connection had grown so gradually, too, that no one's attention had been sufficiently drawn to the concern in its making for any objections to be raised to it. Its stock-in-trade consisted of canvas, bales of cloth, everything connected with riding and shooting gear, as well as imported spices, fruits and wines. Mr. Gookin himself was an unlettered person, who in his earlier days had been an indented servant. He often deplored the lack of "larning" that made it almost impossible for him to keep accounts correctly. They were to be kept correctly enough for him in future.

About nine o'clock that same evening Mr. Slaughter received a visitor at his own house in the person of his new hand. The house itself was of stone, very plainly furnished. Everything pertaining to Mr. Slaughter's call-

ing was stored there with a business-like method, very different from Mr. Gookin's muddled arrangements. Mr. Slaughter could have put his hand in the dark on any one of the rolls of negro cloth, the bundles of boots and shoes, the whips and handcuffs with which it was filled. It contained also a large medicine chest, as well as several books on medical subjects. It was only in extreme cases that the doctor was summoned on Madam's plantation.

The overseer was smoking his pipe. He put it down as Anthony was let in by Aunt Molly, his black servant, and studied the boy attentively.

"So, it's you, lad," he said. "You ought to be in bed, by the look of you. Do you want anything?"

"Yes," said Anthony.

"H'm!" observed Mr. Slaughter. "You couldn't have brought yourself to come here to ask a favour from me yesterday, I reckon!"

"That *was* yesterday," answered Anthony, with a hint of something not all unfriendly in his voice.

"What is't you want, lad?" asked Mr. Slaughter. "Has Nat been misbehaving himself again?"

"I shouldn't betray him to you an he had," answered Nat's room-mate proudly. "What I came for, was to crave a written permit from you permitting me to visit Mr. Gookin at his store."

"What do you want to go there for, lad?" asked Mr. Slaughter.

"I have engaged to cast accounts for him in the evening, after my tasks in the field are finished," Anthony told him.

"You don't let the grass grow under your feet," said Mr. Slaughter dryly. "Gookin always was a natural fool at ciphering, though. What's he going to give you for it?"

Anthony did not say, "That's my business," as he had said yesterday. But his eyes said it for him.

Mr. Slaughter pondered for a moment. Then he reached over for ink-horn and quill. After writing a few lines on a leaf torn from his letter-case, he sanded it, and handed it over to the boy. "Here's your permit, lad," he said. "And now to bed with you!"

CHAPTER IX

NEWGATE MANNERS

It was April, and the world was pink and white with bloom. Peach and apple blossoms in the orchard, and cheery blossoms bordering the drive, made Madam's plantation a fairy place. In the woods the wild crab-apple trees were tipped with the same feathery burden, while the ground was white with saxifrage and wind-flowers, and Joyce and Evelyn gathered violets—pale and scentless, yet still lovely—from the dusky dells. Mr. Slaughter in his daily pilgrimage to the cleared ground in which the tobacco was planted had seen to-day that the young plants had made their first appearance. The throb of spring and fresh life was in the air. From the foxs' earths you might hear the whining of the young cubs, while though the wild turkey-cock still gobbled to the hen, the latter had begun to cast anxious eyes around for a likely moss-covered log, in the shelter of which she could hide her nest from her jealous mate.

It was Saturday afternoon and Madam's dependents were disporting themselves as they thought fit. Some were working in their little garden patches, preparing the ground for the

black-eye peas which were to be planted this month, and which, growing in wildest luxuriance, offered them such a welcome variety in their ordinary diet. Others, like Nat, were collecting pine needles, from which, unknown to Mr. Slaughter, they distilled a villainous, intoxicating drink. Cynthia was sorting splints for brooms in heaps, which it afforded the Brown Baby deep satisfaction to disarrange. Anthony was fishing.

He had been on the plantation a month now, a month in which, save for the lengthening of the days, and the growing balminess of the air, each morning and evening had passed precisely like the first ones had done. Every day he had toiled by the side of Cynthia and the Brown Baby, who still continued to hold interesting though limited conversations with him, eating his meal of corn pone and herrings in the forenoon and having his supper cooked for him in the evening by the grateful mulatto woman. The hoe still bruised his hands, but never once had he failed to keep up with his line. Every evening too, he had pocketed his precious permit, and going over to Mr. Gookin's store had set himself to the task of bringing that gentleman's muddled accounts into something like order. At the end of each week he had received Mr. Gookin's pecuniary acknowledgment of his services. At the end of each week too, he had sold back to Mr. Slaughter more than half his week's allowance of corn.

"You'll never get fat at this rate, lad," the overseer would say uneasily. "It's all money

with you. And yet you've not the air of a money-grabber!"

Anthony merely smiled. Fat he assuredly was not, but he had lost his first pallor and emaciation, and Mr. Slaughter was struck afresh every time he saw him by the extraordinary distinction of his look.

Nat had not molested him further. But his little evil eyes always seemed to be calculating something as he sat on his side of the cabin and watched his room-mate. He had still that night in the cellar to pay back.

Now that the fishing season had arrived, and the mullet were leaping above the water and the herrings had come up in such abundance that a man could not cross the creek on horse-back without treading on them, Anthony had another opportunity to augment his slender income. He was a skilful angler, and at the Great House they were always willing to pay him handsomely for his spoils. And "all for money," as he was, according to Mr. Slaughter, he never failed to set aside a generous portion of what he caught for Field Cynthia, taking care to reserve for her, too, all the "sheepsheads," a noted Virginian fish from which she was able to make a delicacy tasting like mutton-broth, of which the Brown Baby highly approved.

Anthony had to manufacture his own fishing tackle, and his hook and line were of the kind used by the little village boys in his own Yorkshire home. But his patience and craft were such that even with these rude appliances

he was able to obtain greater results than the gallants who, as usual at this season, were throwing themselves heart and soul into the sport, and whose rods were the finest that England could import.

Anthony had chosen a seat on the bank of a crystal stream this April Saturday afternoon—the afternoon that was to be the most tragic of his life. The fish he had already caught lay in a little shining heap at his side. As he sat under the shade of a willow tree, his rude rod in his hand, his poor hat shading his eyes, he could not have been called happy. His every thought was still occupied with plans to earn sufficient money to procure the rifle with which he intended to effect his escape from bondage. Still, for this little hour, sitting in a sun-flecked world, where robins and blue-birds chirped gayly, and a mocking-bird on a bough hard by sang to him her matchless, passionate song, he was almost peaceful. A deer, graceful and erect, bounded into the forest on the opposite bank. It reminded him of little Joyce Rolleston, and how she had sprung across the porch to her brother's side when trying to effect his own rescue a month ago, and a smile that was almost tender touched the hard curves of his mouth.

After debating whether to attend a cock-fight at Fredericksburg or to go a-fishing, Tudor and young Mr. Beverley had finally decided to devote the afternoon to the latter pursuit. Mr. Fauce had voluntarily offered to accompany them. This was to some extent

an honour, since Mr. Fauce, with his age and experience of the world, could easily have chosen more important associates than young students from the William and Mary College. But Mr. Fauce had his own reasons for wishing to stand well with Tudor Rolleston just now.

Walking along the river-bank in their search for a likely spot on which to commence operations, the three gentlemen came to the place where Anthony was sitting.

"We'll dislodge this fellow from his perch, whoever he is," said Tudor, his eye on the spoils at Anthony's side. The latter turning at the word, he added contemptuously, "Why, 'tis the gallows'-bird! Up and make your obeisance, rogue!"

Anthony rose to his feet and made his obeisance, if you could apply the word to the grave sweep of his hat from his head, and the formal, "Sirs, your servant!" of his proud voice.

Mr. Fauce laughed scornfully. "The mangy fox has got himself a new coat, it seems," he said. "Do they teach manners, as well as the rest, at Newgate, rascal?"

"I fear me not," answered Anthony. "Me-thinks 'tis a place where they know no better than to retain their hats on their heads while another uncovers to them!"

His glance at Mr. Fauce's beaver was expressive enough. Young Mr. Beverley, whose hand had instinctively gone up to remove his own forage cap, brought it to his side again

with a shamefaced laugh. What folly had possessed him that he had been on the point of treating this felon servant of the Rollestons like a gentleman?

"I can scarcely take the freedom of chastising your servant in your presence, my dear fellow," drawled Mr. Fauce to Tudor. "Still——"

"Have no fear! He shall answer for his insolence to me!" Tudor told him. His face went scarlet as he saw Anthony after another grave bow resume his seat and his operations. It might almost have seemed, far-fetched as the simile was, that he was dismissing them!

Tudor beckoned furiously to Ephra'm. "Go cut me some limber hickory switches!" he ordered.

"Yes, Mars' Tudor!" answered Ephra'm, with a curious glance at the quiet person on the bank, who must have heard the mandate equally with himself.

If Anthony had heard the mandate he could scarcely have attached any significance to it, the other thought, judging by the unconcerned way he went on fishing.

Ephra'm had the gentlest eyes in the world, full of that strange liquid sadness that one never sees in the eyes of man or animal without a pang. The tears came into them now as he executed Tudor's order.

He was so long in bringing the switches that Tudor, though as a rule he was good to the boy, in his own imperious way, gave him



"Anthony caught him up by his buckskin belt and flung him
into the water." [p. 125.]



a sharp cut for himself with one of them, as he took it from his hand.

"Learn to do my bidding more speedily in future, you lazy hound!" he cried furiously. But he knew perfectly well that it was not laziness, and that Ephra'm, the spryest boy on the Rappahannoc, had delayed on purpose. The sense of being eternally thwarted whenever he attempted to administer punishment to this unbroken underling of his, maddened him.

Anthony was still busy with his rod and line. To all seeming he was taking no interest in what was going on behind him. But he turned his head sharply round when Tudor advanced upon him with the upraised switch.

"If you as much as lay a finger on me, I shall souse you in the creek," he warned him.

"Dog!" cried Tudor. He brought down the hickory—a smart blow—on Anthony's shoulder. The next second the latter had caught him up by his buckskin belt and flung him into the water.

The creek was not very deep. Tudor was easily able to wade out and was helped up the bank by his astounded friends. Had the affair been less serious young Mr. Beverley would have laughed at the appearance he presented. As it was he turned an uneasy glance in Anthony's direction. He knew the sort of punishment that was meted out to obstinate servants resisting their master's correction, in Virginia.

"Summon Mr. Slaughter!" said Tudor when he could speak, his voice so inarticulate with rage that he could scarcely make himself understood.

"Yes, Mars' Tudor," said Ephra'm, cutting off with a great show of zeal. He was not best pleased, though, when he heard Mr. Fauce order his own boy to accompany him on his errand, promising him the taste of a raw hide should he fail to bring the overseer back with him.

Tudor shook the water from his clothes and hair, spluttering out threats and vituperations meanwhile. Mr. Fauce smiled. Young Mr. Beverley watched in growing concern while Anthony angled for an enormous mullet, and, having caught it, took the hook from its gills and placed it with the others at his side.

The sight of the overseer's burly figure in the distance appeared to bring young Mr. Beverley to a sudden resolution. He went up to Anthony, and though half ashamed of his own good-nature, said in a quick, low voice,

"You are new to the country yet, and don't know what's in front of you. I do. You cannot save yourself from the chastisement your insubordination has provoked, but by submitting to it you may mitigate its rigour. Up, and ask your master's pardon, while there is still time."

Anthony looked up at him. "Should you do that were you in my place?" he asked.

"But that's different," objected young Mr. Beverley. "I am a gentleman!"

Anthony laughed, but half indulgently, and young Mr. Beverley withdrew, baffled.

The next minute Mr. Slaughter was up with them.

"My service to you, gentlemen," he said. "You sent for me?"

"Yes, for you to take this fellow to the barn, Mr. Slaughter, to tie him up, and whip him well," his dripping young master told him.

"Why, what's he been up to, sir?" enquired Mr. Slaughter.

It seemed odd to think that Ephra'm had refrained from telling him, odder still to suppose that a person in Mr. Slaughter's position could presume to be amused at the figure the hope of the Rollestons was cutting. The idea was preposterous, of course. All the same, Tudor felt himself colouring angrily under Mr. Slaughter's impassive eye.

"That's no concern of yours, Mr. Slaughter!" he said, with as much hauteur as his appearance would permit. "Take him away and do as I bid you."

"With submission, sir," answered Mr. Slaughter. "If I do dress the lad down I must have some good reason to give to her Honour for doing it."

Tudor in his impatience of all opposition looked at the unmoved Mr. Slaughter as though he could have flown at his throat. "Reason enough," he said passionately, at last. "The ruffian actually dared to throw me into the river."

Mr. Slaughter looked grave. "Well, you'll have to pay for your fun, lad," he said, with something not unlike a sigh to Anthony, while Tudor thought he made an odd choice of words. "Come your ways."

He laid his hand on Anthony's arm. The latter tried to shake him off. But the overseer had a hand that could grip like a vice.

"It's no use, lad," he said. "You've put the rope round your own neck. You'll have to come along with me."

"I shall appeal to Madam!" declared Anthony.

"Don't let the villain 'scape, Mr. Slaughter!" cried Tudor hastily, as he heard. His mother, for her own pride's sake, would, he knew, uphold him before the servants in the retribution he had decreed to the underling who had offered him violence. What she would say about the provocation he had given was another matter. Besides, he himself had no mind to face the others in his present state. Joyce was always considerate when one was in trouble, but it wasn't difficult to imagine how Bob would jeer and Susie giggle, and Molly Ball express serene disapprobation. Besides, Madam had older company on the porch, he knew, and might admonish him sharply for venturing to appear before them in such an unseemly guise. Thus it was that he gave that anxious cry to Mr. Slaughter to hold the prisoner fast, and broke into a sharp ejaculation of rage and dis-

appointment when he saw Anthony slipping through the overseer's grasp like an eel.

"How came you to let him go, Mr. Slaughter?" he demanded resentfully.

Mr. Slaughter surveyed the sky. "Now, there you ask me something I can't answer, sir," he said placidly.

"Well, have after him, you black scamps!" cried Tudor to the negroes, and again Ephra'm and the rest made a great show of scampering after the fugitive.

But Anthony was speeding, swift as an arrow from a bow, in the direction of the Great House. Tudor, with helpless rage in his heart, prepared to follow.

"Let the dogs loose, Mr. Slaughter, in case he tries to get away!" he cried over his shoulder.

Mr. Slaughter ceased to be placid. "With submission, sir, there's no need for that," he objected. "The lad's no more chance against the lot of us than a trapped lynx."

"Yet the lynx seems to have escaped from the trap with some ease just now," remarked Mr. Fauce meditatively.

"An you don't let the dogs loose, Mr. Slaughter, I'll tell Madam you're helping the villain to get away!" cried Tudor.

"A likely story, Mr. Tudor," said the overseer. But, after all, there were limits to his power, and should he persist in refusing, Madam might really be brought to believe that Tudor's accusation had some foundation in fact.

Weighing these things in his mind, Mr. Slaughter did the thing he abhorred and let the dogs loose. But, holding them by the collar, he knocked their heads inexorably against the bars of the cage.

"That's to teach you who's master," he said. "And to let you know what you've got to expect, if you don't loose your hold of that lad when I call you off."

CHAPTER X

"THIRTY-NINE LASHES, WELL LAID ON"

The reader has already been introduced to several of the company Madam was entertaining on the porch this lovely April afternoon. Evelyn Byrd was still staying in the house, and Joyce's school-mates, Molly Ball and Susie and Bob Carter had remained on as their wont often was, when lessons were over, until the evening. One might naturally have supposed that Bob would have been out fishing with Tudor and his friends, but a glance at his sulky face and the ireful glances he every now and then threw in the direction of the Rev. Mr. Swann, would have told you that the arrangement was none of his making. The truth was, Bob was in disgrace. Having neglected to inform his careful parents that his dancing pumps were worn out, he had thus been enabled to miss attendance at the dancing-class which was held in succession for the young people at the different planters' houses every week. Mr. Justice Carter had, in consequence, sent a note to Mr. Swann by Bob's hands that very morning, mentioning the circumstances, and asking him to impress the enormity of his offence on Bob's mind. Mr.

Swann had impressed it on more than Bob's mind and by way of deepening the lesson had kept him in for the afternoon. It was only through Joyce's intercession that he was allowed to pass the weary indoors hours on the porch instead of in the seclusion of the school-room.

Bob was feeling distinctly grateful to Joyce. He had with his own ears heard Mr. Fauce ask if he should get her Madam's permission to join the fishing expedition and had seen her eyes glisten with pleasure, until she remembered his own imprisoned state.

"Oh, take yourself with them if you've a mind to," Bob had said gruffly. "You don't need to consider me. I shall do well enough here."

But in spite of the assurance Joyce had still persisted in her refusal.

Bob kicked the corner of the rug in some embarrassment after the others had gone. "That was handsome in you, Joyce," he observed. "And I will say this for you, that if you weren't a girl, you'd make the rarest boy of my acquaintance!"

If Mr. Fauce's compliments left Joyce unmoved, the magnitude of this one, from such a source, brought the pink into her cheeks. "How obliging in you, Bob!" she said gratefully.

But Bob was still kicking at the rug. "I can't abide that Mr. Fauce!" he burst out. "Why should he presume to conclude that Madam would grant you the permission an he asked for it? Why, 'twas only yesterday

I prayed her, on my knees a'most, to suffer me to take you fishing and she gave me a naysay."

"That was because I tore my petticoat, leaping the freshes and mounting on the fences, the last time," confessed Joyce. "And you should not have an ill-will to Mr. Fauce, Bob. Indeed he is prodigious amiable. Imagine his bringing round Archduke every morning for me to ride!"

"When I come by a plantation of my own, I'll give you a better horse than Archduke," promised Bob recklessly.

"Oh, Bob, you could not," declared little Evelyn Byrd. "Archduke is the most elegant horse in the world and Mr. Fauce suffers me to feed him with sugar from my hand before Joyce mounts. Why may I not ride with you sometimes, Joyce?" asked the child, lifting a wistful face.

"In truth, I know not, my dearest little love, except that Madam wills it so," answered Joyce, taking her hand.

No Virginian thunderstorm was ever blacker than was Master Bob Carter's face as he listened.

As usual, Madam's porch was full to overflowing with a gay, well-bred, well-dressed crowd. All was laughter and gaiety and good cheer. It was well to be alive on an April day on Madam's plantation—if one happened to belong to Madam's world.

It would have been hard to say why a running figure, coming from the direction of

the river, caught everyone's eye, almost at the same moment. Something tragic there must have been about it, to arouse the interest it did. There was quite a little stir among the company in the porch.

"This swift-footed Mercury doubtless brings us tidings of importance!" said the Rev. Mr. Swann.

"Tidings of importance! Why, 'tis plain as an open trail that the fellow is running away from someone!" scoffed Bob to Joyce. But Joyce had moved a step forward.

"I perceive your son, Madam, and Mr. Beverley the younger, and Mr. Fauce behind the runner," observed brother Joseph, as though he had made a discovery, two minutes after everyone else had perceived the same thing.

"Why, 'tis the Newgate Bird," cried Bob Carter suddenly. "By George! but the fellow runs to admiration, though."

It *was* the Newgate bird. He had reached the porch by this time, had doffed his poor hat, and sunk on one knee before his mistress. His clothes were those of the meanest field hand. But there was a dignity in his bearing that kept every eye upon him and that made even proud Madam Rolleston give him the attention he claimed as his right.

"Well, sirrah?" she demanded.

"Madam," said the boy, and his voice came out to them stern but very clear, "your son laid hands on me to strike me. No man with any manhood in him may suffer an affront

like that, and, after warning, I threw him in the river. For this"—a fierce flush dyed his face at the words, but he held his head like a king—"he has bidden your overseer lash me. I appeal to you, Madam, to spare me this shameful, this unspeakable indignity."

The others had come up by this time. Murmurs of astonishment broke from everyone at Tudor's appearance. Susie Carter giggled, as Tudor had known she would.

"Are you hurt, son?" asked Madam. It was the mother in her made her put that question first. When Tudor had answered it in the negative, a sense of angry humiliation overtook her. For her handsome son to appear thus—and before some of the first gentry of the Rappahannoc!

Tudor tossed the dripping hair from his eyes and came and stood in front of her. "I pray you give orders that this insolent ruffian who has dared to thrust himself into your presence be removed, Madam," he said.

"Madam, I have appealed to you," said the boy with a solemnity in his voice that Madam could not disregard.

"Nay, 'tis but a felon knave, whom your son has ordered to be corrected for unheard-of insolence, Madam," Mr. Fauce reminded her, and Madam breathed more easily, as though some tension had been taken off the situation.

Burly Mr. Slaughter and a crowd of negroes

appeared in the distance. The overseer was holding the bloodhounds by their collars. Madam beckoned him to her. Relinquishing the dogs to a negro driver, Mr. Slaughter came forward. He must have said something to the driver, though, to make the man hang on to the dogs as he was doing.

In the waiting pause Anthony turned on Tudor, scorn on lip and eye. "An you had one generous sentiment in you," he cried, "you would acknowledge that what I did was but a fair return for the wrong you offered me. 'Twas the only satisfaction I could give you—since a convict may not wear a sword."

Contempt to the uttermost was in his voice, yet the proud sadness of his words made a strange appeal to Tudor—an appeal of which he was ashamed. For one second it almost seemed as though the heir of the Rollestons was going to do a surprising thing. Then recovering himself, and furious at the weakness which had half inclined him to let the fellow go free, he turned again to his mother.

"Madam, I protest against your delay in confirming the punishment I have ordered," he cried in bitter resentment.

"Perhaps Madam would prefer that the stripes be administered at the public whipping-post," suggested Mr. Fauce saively.

Madam's servant lifted a beautiful, solemn face. "Life had not left me so much, Madam, that you need grudge to spare me this last shame!" he said.

Madam looked moved, in spite of herself,

seeing which, Mr. Fauce stepped into the breach, saying smoothly,

"With your permission, Madam, I would counsel young Mr. Beverley, here, not to make the story public at the College of William and Mary. Tudor's fellow-students would flout him finely, I fear, did they learn that he had been flung into the river like a puppy-dog by his own servant, and that his mother condoned the outrage."

"Madam"—Tudor's voice was choked—"you would not make me seem a thing of naught before our servants and the gentry here assembled?"

"I make my prayer to you as a woman, Madam—as a mother, whose own flesh and blood may one day stand in need of the justice I claim from you now," came up to her in proud entreaty from the other kneeling boy.

Madam's face was tense. Joyce knew her mother too well to dare to speak to her. But she came and knelt at her side and touched the skirt of her robe, like a little pleading child. And again the convict's blue eyes rested on her with a strange look as he waited for Madam's decision.

Madam beckoned the overseer to her.

Anthony rose to his feet and his head took on a royal lift. "Think again, Madam, before you put this undying stain upon the honour of your house!" he warned her sombrely.

"My house, miscreant!" repeated Madam in haughty bewilderment. Then, turning to

the overseer she said coldly, "Take this felon, and give him thirty-nine lashes, as his master—and *yours*," added Madam arrogantly, reading something in the overseer's eye—"has ordered."

"And see that you lay them well on, overseer," added Mr. Fauce, taking a pinch of snuff from his jewelled snuff-box.

Anthony stood quite still for a second. Then, without warning, he turned and, swift as an elk, was bounding over the lawns. The crowd of waiting negroes flung themselves upon him, but he fought them off, and ran clear.

"Jove! But what a high-mettled fellow he is!" cried Bob Carter. The excitement of the chase was on him and in another minute he would have leapt the porch and joined it, if the little firm hands that could hold Archduke in check had not seized him by the arm and held him tight.

"Oh, Bob, how *base* in you!" cried Joyce.

"Well, upon my word, miss!" cried Bob, rubbing his arm and glaring. Then the sight of the rare tears in Joyce's eyes sobered him. "I suppose it's being a girl makes you so mighty tender-hearted," he said resignedly. "But there! 'tis a gallant fox sure enough, and shall save his brush for me."

Madam had not supported Tudor in his pretensions to authority for nothing. "Loose the dogs!" he cried now in a ringing tone of command that the driver, who was holding the dogs in, knew better than not to obey.

Anthony's chance was over then, of course. He doubled like a hare, but the savage beasts were on him and had penned him down in an incredibly short space of time. Mr. Slaughter, running as he had never run in his life, got them off before they had done much harm. But with a crowd of negroes and servants—for the grooms waiting with the gentlemen's horses had joined the chase—penning him in, and hanging on to him like dogs on a coon, all hope of escape for the boy was gone.

He got to his feet, panting, dishevelled, but struggling to the last. Those who were holding him looked to Mr. Slaughter for instructions.

"Take him to the barn," said the overseer curtly, and went to get his whip.

Tudor returned indoors to change his wet garments. The company in the porch, who had found the episode unexpectedly exciting, began to discuss it in their light, easy way. Joyce sat very still, looking into space. She seemed to be listening. Then all at once, and to Bob's horror, she broke into a storm of tears.

Bob in his miserable, masculine helplessness had yet the sense and chivalry to place himself before her in such a way that she was hidden from Madam's eyes. He also beckoned to Molly Ball, ever so slightly with his hand. But that eminently practical maiden, whose steady good sense always taught her what to do at the right moment, was already on her way to Joyce's side.

"Control yourself, my dearest Joyce," she said, her shapely white hands holding Joyce's in a firm clasp. Miss Ball was a person whom it was good to have for a friend, loyal, true, and quite untroubled by nerves.

The sobs were tearing Joyce's throat, and Molly pressed her against her so as to stifle the sound. But the highly-strung child was beside herself. "Can't you hear them lashing him, Molly?" she cried, her eyes wild with pain.

"Nay, I can hear naught," answered Molly. "And besides, my love, wrongdoers must be punished," she added steadily, her peach-bloom face steady and resolved. But little Joyce Rolleston, finely-tempered steel as she was when it was a question of bearing anything herself, flinched and sobbed on her shoulder.

Meanwhile they had forced Anthony—still fighting as a man fights when more than his life is at stake—into the barn, had stripped him of his shirt, and slung him up to a beam, until the points of his toes only just touched the floor. He hung still enough, then.

Mr. Slaughter coming in with his whip saw the crowd gaping at him.

"Out with you!" he cried, laying the crop about their heads and shoulders, not caring whom he struck. In two minutes the place was empty and Mr. Slaughter slammed the door.

"I've got to do it, lad," he said. "It's Madam's orders, and my duty. But I'll be

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hanged if you shall take it tied like a negro."

With a slash of his clasp-knife he cut Anthony down.

"You're not the kind to run away after I've trusted you like that, lad," he said. "Turn your back."

Anthony turned his back and Mr. Slaughter did his duty.

After it was over the overseer wiped the wet whip-lash with a wisp of straw.

"First nine-and-thirty I've ever seen taken without a whine," he observed. "Put on your shirt, lad, and go home."

CHAPTER XI

SCARS OF HONOUR

On Madam's porch, the emotional outburst in which the daughter of the house had ventured to indulge had of necessity to be of short duration. Miss Rolleston was too sought-after a young person to be left to herself for very long, and pressed against Molly Ball, and shielded by the faithful Bob as she was, she was soon espied. Mr. Fauce who, perhaps, had had his eye on the little group all the time, moved forward as soon as the child had wiped her eyes.

"I regret, madam, that you should have been exposed to so vexatious a scene," he said. "But the chastisement the wretch has by this time received will breed a humbler spirit in him, and teach him to keep a more respectful distance in future."

Joyce did not answer, but the grey eyes, still tear-stained for all her efforts, regarded Mr. Fauce with an expression which that gentleman by no stretch of imagination could have construed into a welcome.

"Have I been so unhappy as to offend you, madam?" he asked, bending over her, while Molly Ball moved away.

True to Madam's training, Joyce dropped

him a chill curtsey. "I hope you will have the goodness to spare me any discussion of what has passed, sir," she said coldly. Then the memory of the sinister part the speaker had played in the "vexatious" scene overtook her, and she became all child again. "Oh, I found you inhuman, sir," she burst out with a stamp of her satin shoe on the wooden floor of the porch, that made Bob look apprehensively in Madam Rolleston's direction.

"Madam, I am obliged to you!" said Mr. Fauce, stiffly. His resentment, or perhaps some real feeling, made him add something that a minute's reflection would have checked. "How comes Miss Rolleston to take such an interest in her mother's servant?" he enquired blandly.

There was a little intake of breath at Joyce's side, and Bob Carter's sturdy fist doubled up. Had he been a year older it would have gone to his sword, and Mr. Fauce might have had to answer to him for the subtle suggestion of insult implied in the words.

But the innuendo had passed Joyce by as lightly as the wind over the white petals of a wood anemone. She stared at Mr. Fauce with a puzzled frown. "I take an interest in all our people, sir," she said simply. A hint of anger had come into her eyes. She felt instinctively that Mr. Fauce had meant to hurt her in some insidious way. "Besides, suffering does not leave me unmoved, however little it may affect some persons," she added

pointedly. "It would give me concern did I know that my horse or my dog—or even you yourself, sir—were in pain!"

Bob guffawed with joy. "There's for you, sir!" he cried ecstatically, and not so low either but that Mr. Fauce heard him.

"Have a care, you unmannerly young cub, lest you find my cane a more searching instrument than Mr. Swann's ferule," said the offended gentleman.

Joyce's repartee had been of the kind in which Bob himself would have indulged, and it was well for her that Madam was not there to overhear her rudeness. But Mr. Fauce, though he had coloured with anger, had looked relieved too. Man of the world as he was, he had only to look into Joyce's eyes to know that it was childish temper merely that had dictated the thrust, and that it was only an angry little girl, and not an affronted woman, with whom he would have to make his peace on the morrow. He was clever enough to realise that it would be a hopeless business to attempt anything of the kind to-day.

"Madam, I am your humble servant," he said, with a bow.

"Sir, I am yours," answered Miss Rolleston, her curtsy very stately indeed. Then she turned away to busy herself with her mother's guests.

The rooks were going off to roost before Joyce was free from her social duties and able to retire to her own chamber. It was still light in the west, but the grey twilight blend-

ing with the river mist hung like a pall over the nearer landscape. It was chilly, too, now that the sun had gone down, and Sukey had the logs blazing out a welcome.

Joyce sat down on the rug in front of the hearth, gazing for quite a long time into the ruddy glow. Pictures came out of the fire for her, as they had always done. Elves danced among the leaping flames, and an old witch with sparks for eyes, was carried up the chimney on her broomstick. A knight in shining armour crested the topmost log, while from the heart of the blaze, where the fire burnt fiercest, stood out a tortured face. The little girl put her hand out suddenly as though to shut it out, and Mammy Chloe who was hovering uneasily around, aware that some trouble was in the air, held out her arms. but for once, her nursling did not go to them.

"Afterwards, my own Mammy," she said. "But I would fain have you do something for me first."

"Yo des gotter ask, chile," answered Mammy, while Sukey looked yearning. If only Miss Joyce, who seemed unhappy, had claimed some service from her! Mammy caught the look and said, "Go 'long, yo' 'quisitive black hussy!" as a matter of duty.

"Mammy," said Joyce, her hand still shutting out the pictures in the fire, "do you know how they used the new white servant in the barn, to-day?"

"Laws yes, honey," answered Mammy.

"But mah baby no call to feel bad, dat ar way, 'bout jes a field hand."

Joyce took no heed. "Were they more than common cruel to him, Mammy?" she asked with a wincing face.

"'Specs he done got 'nough fo' to mek him not frow Mars' Tudor in de ribber no mo'!" answered Mammy drily.

Mammy had given Tudor a hot drink to drive out any cold he might have taken from his immersion in the water, and had carried off his dripping ruffles and saturated silken coat to dry. She had also dressed the big weal on Ephra'm's shoulder brought there by Tudor's switch. In consequence her feelings were mixed.

"Mammy," said Joyce, with an earnest tone in her voice that made the black woman turn and look at her searchingly, "nobody can care for people when they are sick and in trouble like you can. And Bob and Tudor say you are better than all the physicians in Virginia for curing bruises. I remember, too, how when I fell from the peach-tree and near broke my arm, the healing ointment you rubbed on it presently took the pain away."

"Reckon de 'sicians 'mos gib dere souls to find out de secret ob dat 'intment, honey," observed Mammy, with calm pride.

"If you please, Mammy, I want you to take some of it down to the quarters with you and dress the new servant's wounds with it," said Joyce directly.

Mammy, after making some slight demur about wasting the precious commodity on such a " 'no count 't all pusson " as Anthony, finally consented. As a matter of fact she was almost as 'quisitive' as the unfortunate Sukey, to see at close quarters the individual who had dared to lay hands on Mars' Tudor's sacred person, Ephra'm's account of the transaction having lost nothing in the telling.

After his whipping, Anthony had done as the overseer bade him. He had put on his shirt and had walked back from the barn at his ordinary pace. Everybody glanced at him as he went past, with eager curiosity. But the look on his face was such that nobody spoke, either to pity or to jeer.

With almost unseeing eyes he made his way to his cabin, longing for its shelter as much as ever did wounded buck for the fastnesses of the thicket. But on its threshold he encountered a spiteful face. It was Nat's, of course. But strangely enough, the interest in it almost matched the spite. Although Nat would have denied the fact angrily enough himself, every waking minute of his day was occupied with thoughts of this strange roommate of his, and he was now full of an inordinate curiosity to see how he would bear himself in his present humiliating situation.

Anthony took no notice of him. But Nat had expected that. The only occasions in the preceding month when Anthony had appeared even conscious of his existence was when in pure exasperation he had overstepped the line

of demarcation that the other had so definitely laid down for him the first day.

Nat decided to try the effect of a taunt. With his eyes fixed on Anthony's frozen face, he got quite close to the door in order to make a run for it, should the other show any disposition to resent the too personal nature of his remarks.

"And how does your High Mightiness like the taste of the negro-whip?" he enquired.

Rapid flight, or indeed, flight of any kind was quite unnecessary. Anthony paid no heed to him at all. He took no more account of the taunt than if a mosquito had stung him. He had that day drunk the cup of shame to the dregs, but he had not sunk so low that the crowing of a dung-hill cock, such as this, had power to move him.

Nat was not so dull but he understood as much. He would far rather that the other had laid hands on him.

"Perhaps now your own back's scarred for you, you won't go making such a to-do about my hand," he snarled, suddenly and unexpectedly.

But Anthony's face did not move by a muscle. It was doubtful if he even heard. The heated words might have been pollen blown by the wind, for all the effect they had on him.

Nat sat and glowered. "I suppose you think spawn like me ain't worth a cuss, much less an answer," he cried at last. Passion choked him, and forgetting his caution, he

walked up to the other and in a spasm of fury struck out at him.

Across the stricken face there came the look of pure loathing that hurt and maddened Nat afresh every time he saw it. It did not lessen his bitterness either you may be sure that, in spite of all he had gone through, Anthony was able to fling him off lightly and easily. But the keenest sting of all lay in the fact that after he had done it he never looked to see the result, never lifted as much as an eyelash to find out whether Nat had fallen or was preparing to attack him again. It was just as though he had flicked off some repulsive insect that had settled on his person. Nat did not renew the assault. He went out quite silently.

After he had gone, Anthony opened the wooden shutters as wide as they would go, and sat huddled up close to the window. Outside drab leather-wing bats were circling about in the grey twilight. The river mists came cold across his face like a damp hand. The frogs were beginning to croak, and the whip-poor-will, that saddest of night birds, had already taken up its moan. "Whip poor Will! Whip poor Will! Whip poor Will!" it reiterated drearily.

Anthony laid his arms down on the rough wooden window-ledge and his head on his arms. The chill vapours from the river were not more corpse-like than his cheeks. But Mr. Slaughter's whip had seared more than the flesh on his back. The shame of the

punishment he had received had sunk deep into his soul. With the plaint of the whip-poor-will in his ears, he sat there broken and lifeless. The brave spirit which had borne itself so gallantly had come to the hour of its greatest weakness.

After some long while he became conscious that someone was knocking at his door. He did not bid whoever knocked to enter. He did not even turn his head when he heard footsteps in the cabin. His interest in the outside world was dead.

The invader was Mammy Chloe. She threw a strangely comprehending glance at the boy's huddled-up figure.

"I'se done fotch yo de mos oncommon 'intment yo evah see, chile," she announced. "I'se gwine dress yo' back for yo'."

"Pray, leave me," said the boy, without looking at her.

"Yo des let me, chile, laik yo' was Mars' Tudor," pleaded Mammy, gathering friendliness. "Dis heah 'intment 'mos 'raculous. It gwine send yo' mis'ry right 'way."

"Pray, leave me," said the lifeless voice again.

"De Gre't House folks done send me wif it, chile," Mammy told him as a last inducement.

"Then tell them I have done myself the honour to return it!" ordered the boy, sternly. His blue eyes were glazing and the gold in his hair had changed to the drab of the plumage of a young eagle. But his tone was so in-

exorable that even the redoubtable Mammy did not try to persuade him further.

She went back to her little charge with dragging steps. Joyce was watching for her at the window, and ran to her when she came in with painful eagerness.

"Were you able to ease him, Mammy?" she asked.

"No, honey," answered Mammy. "Dat boy not gwine take no help f'om our family."

The child paled. "Is he sick, Mammy?" she enquired, her hand clasping and unclasping nervously.

"Dat boy gwine die, honey," answered Mammy solemnly.

"Die, Mammy?" Joyce trembled.

"Des dat, honey," answered Mammy in a matter-of-fact way. "'Pears like de shame ob dat whippin' is de stone roun' his neck dat gwine sink him."

"But can naught be done, Mammy?" asked Joyce. She had been sitting on the floor as she listened, her arms resting on the black women's knees, looking up into her face. But she rose to her feet as she spoke. There were no tears in her eyes now; instead, there was in them the look Bob Carter had often seen there when she had set herself some hard task in shooting or climbing.

"Laws, chile, who you 'spose gwine worry theirselves 'bout him?" answered Mammy. "Ole mistis she mad 'case all de quality know he frow Mars' Tudor in de ribber. Mars' Tudor he not do nuffin' 'case he feared

de obers larf at him. 'Sides o' dat, dat boy not gwine let dem help him, nohow. He ruther die!"

"He would never kill himself, Mammy." Joyce spoke with a strange conviction.

"No need fo' dat, honey," declared Mammy. "His heart am broke. He jes go out laik dat!" She snuffed the myrtleberry candle as she spoke, in dreadful illustration.

"You and I must do it alone then, Mammy," said Joyce. She flew to the oak chest and dragged out a crimson cloak and hood for herself and a shawl for the black woman. "Come, Mammy!" she said, resolutely.

"Doan' you do it, honey," said Mammy, allowing herself to be pulled along by her little charge's eager fingers nevertheless.

The departure of their Mis' Joyce and Mammy Chloe at this hour excited no comment in the household. Joyce's day was a busy one, filled to overflowing with her regular studies with the Rev. Mr. Swann, her French and dancing lessons with Monsieur Sabroux, and her lessons on the harpsichord with Mademoiselle, his sister, not to mention her housewifely and social duties, performed under her mother's careful eye. This twilight hour, following the afternoon's functions of entertaining Madam's company at home, or driving with her in the great family chariot to pay calls on the neighbouring gentry, she more often than not spent with her humble friends at the Quarters. Field Cynthia's

cabin found her a frequent visitor, since it was at this hour that the Brown Baby had his bath, a ceremony at which Joyce lent such humble assistance as that autocratic small person permitted.

There were peculiar circumstances attending Anthony's case, of course, but otherwise Joyce and Mammy Chloe's visit to a sick boy in the Quarters would not have been considered unusual. Besides physicking them, Madam nursed her servants when they were ill, herself. She would have thought nothing of sitting up half the night, ministering to a suffering field-hand, and Joyce took her share of the nursing with her as a matter of course. As for the house servants, they were treated in sickness exactly as though they really belonged to the family. Once when Sukey had been sick of a fever, Joyce had nursed her night and day, refusing every invitation long after all danger to her little handmaid was over. She would have fallen considerably in Madam's estimation had she done otherwise.

On reaching Anthony's cabin, Joyce looked surprised as Mammy made a movement to lift the latch without any preliminary whatever.

"Oh, but please knock, Mammy," she said, drawing back a step.

"He not answer ef I does, honey," Mammy told her. "Dat boy's sperrit am daid, chile, I tell yo', laik it had been struck by de lightning." She knocked loudly to

prove the truth of her words. As she expected there was no response. Then she opened the door and ushered in her little mistress.

Anthony sat where she had left him, huddled up against the window, his arms on the window-ledge, his head on his arms.

Joyce advanced a step towards him.

"An I had been as brave as you have been to-day, sir, I would not sit there with hanging head!" she said.

She had flung the words at the bowed figure like a challenge. Mammy, who had expected her to break into gentle, pitying words of comfort, looked down at the child astonished.

Anthony took his head from his hands, and the tortured face Joyce had seen in the fire-light looked up at her.

Its owner rose slowly to his feet. "You honour my poor dwelling by entering it, madam," he said. "Yet you come to visit the meanest and most shamed of your servants."

"I come to visit a gallant gentleman," said Joyce Rolleston steadily.

Her hood had slipped from her head. Her little fair face was brave and eager. There was a boyish intrepidity in the slender grace of her carriage.

Anthony bowed low. He set her a chair, or rather the rough block of wood which did duty for one. After she was seated he stood looking down at her with grave consideration. "I await your pleasure, madam," he said.

"You are weak and suffering, sir," said Joyce, "and Mammy and I came to bring you relief, an you be not too haughty of spirit to accept it from us."

The boy laughed bitterly. "Haughty of spirit? I, madam?" he cried. "I, who shall carry to my grave the marks of your overseer's whip?"

"And what then?" said Joyce, her voice high, her eyes shining. "Were they mine I should consider myself greatly honoured to bear them. I should count them scars of honour, sir!"

Anthony stood looking down at her for a long time. "Truly, madam?" he said at last.

"Truly, sir," answered the child. There was no trace of self-consciousness about her. Sitting on the wooden block she clasped her hands about her knees, and looking up into his face tried in a moved, eager way to make him understand.

"No one's honour can be tarnished, unless they tarnish it themselves," she told him. "A king, through no fault of his own, might be exposed to shames and indignities and—yes—*stripes*, sir," she added, bringing the word out fearlessly. "But if he bear them kingly, we count him not less, but more of a king for them. I have often thought"—she paused a little shyly, for never before except to Mammy Chloe had she revealed the secret workings of her heart, or the dreams that came to her, as she looked into the blazing

logs, or across the Rappahannoc to the magic lands beyond the mountains.

But the blue eyes into which she was looking encouraged her, and she went on,

"I have often thought that were I a king I could not *abide* to have my way made all royal and smooth for me. I would tread the same rough road as the poorest of my people, and then, if I out-distanced them, I should know I had won, not because I was a king, but because I was a man. None could have had greater trials to bear or have been more hardly used than you yourself, sir. None could have borne themselves more bravely. And were I your friend——"

"Were you my friend, instead of my mistress, madam?" enquired the stern young voice above her.

"I should be proud of you, sir," the child told him.

Blue as the blue jay's crest, blue as the most cerulean peak of the Blue Ridge itself, were the eyes of Madam's servant now. The glance he bent on the little sitting figure was very grave and tender. "I ask but one better thing of life, madam!" he said, with the voice of a conqueror. "And since such as you can feel like that towards such as me, I take up my courage again with both hands. But have you not forgot my position? Would you have said as much had you remembered that I was a felon convict before I became a disgraced servant?"

Joyce's eyes never clouded. "I said ere

now, sir, that one might be exposed to shames and indignities through no fault of their own," she answered. "I think—I believe—nay I *know*"—Joyce came at the knowledge with a glad rush—"that whatever deed of yours brought you here, it was one of which no gentleman in the world need feel ashamed."

"I thank you, madam, for your trust in me," said the boy simply, the proud lines of his face unbelievably softened.

"And now you will suffer Mammy to dress your wounds, will you not?" said Joyce, coming down to mundane things again.

"I have no wounds, madam—save those of the spirit, which you have healed," said Anthony. "But since it would be ungracious to refuse you aught after your distinguishing kindness to me to-day, I must e'en let Mammy have her way." He smiled pleasantly, almost gaily at the black woman, who had remained an attentive but silent spectator of the whole scene.

"There is another matter I should like to speak of, sir—but I find it difficult," said Joyce, with a new nervous catch in her voice.

"Say what you will, madam," answered Anthony.

"I regret that Brother Tudor was put in the river, of course," Joyce began, and then stopped, frightened at the sternness that had come into Anthony's face, and that changed him in an instant from a boy into an iron-willed, unapproachable man. She went on stumbly, finding each word more and

more difficult to speak to eyes as cold as the snows which crowned the Blue Ridge in winter time. "My mamma may have seemed harsh in the way she used you, sir, but an she had not thought it right she would not have done it. If you could bring yourself—" Anthony's granite face stopped the words on her tongue, and she finished with tremulous dignity, "I should not like you should think too ill of us, sir!"

"In truth, these matters are too hard for you, little madam," Anthony told her with a protecting kindness in his voice which showed that the two had changed places. "You have given me back my courage. I have taken it from your hands to-night as a free gift. I thank you from my heart. But now you must let me use it as a man must. For your mother have no fear—I war not on women. Your brother must of course answer to me for to-day's affront, but the reparation I shall exact from him I shall settle as my honour dictates."

"Good-night, sir!" said Joyce sadly.

"Good-night, madam," answered Anthony, and bending on one knee, he kissed her hand.

"I jes 'scort mah Miss Joyce home, den I come and 'tend to yo, chile," Mammy promised.

When she returned the cabin was no longer in darkness. Anthony had added log upon log to the fire, until the whole place seemed illuminated.

Mammy "tended" to the sore back as only Mammy could, charming away the smart as much by the mesmeric touch of her fingers as by the application of the famous salve.

"That's prodigious fine ointment you're using, Mammy," said the comforted patient, after a while. "What is it made of?"

"Yerbs, chile," Mammy told him, working away with fingers as light as the brush of a butterfly's wing. "De juices ob de jasmine, de bark ob de prickly ash, de root ob de ginseng, an' de jelly ob de sweet gum all goes to'rds de makin' ob dat 'intment. But min' dis now, all dem thins got be properly mix. Widout dat, dat 'intment no mo' use den de las' year's horns ob a buck, or de top ob de 'bacco plant. 'Pears like deyjes gotter be mix' by a pusson whose back has bent, an' whose tears has flowed, an' whose heart has broke."

"Are you one of these, Mammy?" asked Anthony gently.

"Sakes alibe! no, chile!" answered Mammy.

Anthony said no more till the dressing was over, and he stood up, eased and refreshed.

"My purse is not long enough to make you any return, Mammy," he said. The black woman gave an angry start and he smiled up into her eyes. "But had I the wealth of the Indies, I would not offer it you," he told her. "I should rather choose to accept your goodness to me to-day as a bounty."

"You got quality ways, chile," answered Mammy, going out very quickly.

A few minutes after Mammy had departed, a gentle, dark face poked itself round the door. It belonged to Field Cynthia. One hand carried a tray containing a platter of hominy and a dish of superbly-cooked fish. The other supported the Brown Baby.

The mulatto woman's expression was timid. She had seen Anthony when he came back from the barn, and his expression had frightened her. She scarcely hoped that he would eat the food, but she had meant to put the tray softly beside him, and slip out without even obtruding such a solace-for-every-human-woe as the Brown Baby on his notice. Thus the bright light from the glowing logs which illuminated the cabin seemed almost a sacrilege when considered as a setting to the stricken figure she expected to find.

Instead of which, here was Anthony, holding himself as usual, snapping his fingers at the Brown Baby, and observing in most appreciative tones how good the fish smelt. Field Cynthia's sad eyes became pools of sunlight in her pleasure at the phenomena.

But the Brown Baby's face wore a look of tremendous purpose. Unknown to everyone he had been enlarging his vocabulary during the past month. And now, pointing a fat brunette finger in Anthony's direction, he delivered himself of the profound monosyllable, "M-a-n!" He then waited for the applause which was his due.

He got it, of course, although Field Cynthia for the moment was speechless with admira-

tion. But Anthony, with the laughing remark that he would take his word for it, picked him up and tossed him almost to the ceiling. The action brought him a sharp reminder of the afternoon's proceedings, but as if in defiance, he tossed the Brown Prodigy up again and yet again, until its chuckles and gurglings of pure joy became as weak as the popping of little seed-burs.

"What's got into you, lad?" asked the dry voice of Mr. Slaughter at the door. "I came to look after a sick hand, but I've been barking up the wrong tree, it seems."

Field Cynthia dropped a curtsey and took herself out of the presence of such distinguished company, while the overseer in a gruff sort of way, as though he were ashamed of the action, took a bottle and glass from his pocket. The bottle contained a cordial which he had mixed with his own hands for the patient.

"Drink it down, lad," he ordered. "It's to do you good."

A sudden twinkle came to Anthony's eye, and he reached for the drinking-gourd which Field Cynthia had brought in on the tray. "You shall drink with me, Mr. Slaughter," he observed with the gracious condescension a young prince might have shown in according a like invitation.

"I'm glad I've your permission, lad, to drink my own cordial from my own glass," retorted the overseer sardonically.

"Nay, not from your own glass, Mr. Slaughter," said Anthony with a coolness

which made the overseer's eyes almost start from their head. "For this occasion, I fear me, you must make shift with my gourd. I have a purpose for the glass!"

"Well, I'll be hanged! exclaimed Mr. Slaughter.

"Not until you've drunk a bumper with me, Mr. Slaughter!" Anthony reassured him. "The cordial is with you, sir. Fill up your gourd, and call a toast!"

Mr. Slaughter filled the gourd and drank its contents stolidly, giving, "His Excellency, the Governor!"

"With all my heart!" said Anthony. "A very worthy gentleman, as I hear in all companies." But he had the grace to drop his "sass" at this point, drinking with all honour and respect to the health of Virginia's soldier governor.

"And now for my toast, Mr. Slaughter!" said Anthony. He threw back his head and the look on his face was half proud, half tender. "To my kinswoman!" he said, and draining the glass let it fall from his fingers on to the floor of the cabin, where it lay smashed into a hundred pieces.

"What did you want to go and do that for, you audacious young scamp?" cried Mr. Slaughter when he could speak.

"To ensure against you or anybody else, ever drinking again out of the glass in which *that* toast has been pledged," answered the gentleman who had broken it unreservedly.

"They don't want for consequence where

you come from, lad!" observed the overseer.

"Yet have I drunk a bumper with you to-day, Mr. Slaughter—which I would not have done with your master," answered Anthony, and the overseer had not much to grumble at in the look the boy gave him.

Nat came back shortly after Mr. Slaughter left. In the interval he had not sought the society of his mates. He had been chewing the cud of his own bitter thoughts and questing about in his mind for a sufficiently stinging taunt to greet Anthony with on his return. When he had found what he wanted, he opened the cabin door.

"Have you a mind to let me put a negro plaster on your back? It's only made of salt and pepper and vinegar, you know," he observed.

"Have you a mind to lodge to-night in the potato cellar?" retorted Anthony grimly.

Nat stared at him open-mouthed. This alarmingly alert person was very different from the sick dog he had left, and whom he had imagined he could insult with impunity. In consequence his obliging offer was not repeated.

When the horn sounded next morning, Anthony was ready to start to the field with the others. As usual, Mr. Slaughter made no comment, though had Anthony, or anyone else, pleaded inability to put in a day's work after what he had given him yesterday, he would have allowed the excuse. Strangely enough the only person to take any exception to the arrangement was Tudor.

Tudor, who was ostensibly supposed to be reading the classic authors with Mr. Swann until his Alma Mater could receive him again, could not really be said to add much to Mr. Swann's tutorial burdens. To-day he and young Mr. Beverley had decided to attend the race-course at Fredericksburg, where one of Mr. Fauce's horses was running a heat.

Madam watched them depart with a slightly puckered brow. Proud and fond as she was of Tudor, he was fast becoming a serious anxiety to her. There had been a terrible time last term, when the Commissary had written to complain that the boy "kept race-horses at ye College, and bet at ye billiard and other gaming tables," and had threatened his expulsion. Madam had removed the horses and paid her son's debts, but it was only after Tudor had given his solemn word of honour to the Commissary, that under no circumstances whatever would he bet again during his stay at College, that the latter had decided to allow him to remain on. Tudor's haughty spirit had chafed against these restrictions on the liberty of such an important person as himself. But all the same, the College and its Commissary were in too high repute in Virginia, backed up as they both were by his Excellency, for him to care to risk the disgrace of being turned out.

Tudor would not make any bets on the course to-day. Madam had no fear of that. He had given his promise to the Commissary, and it was inconceivable that a Rolleston

should break his word. But the little pucker on her brow still remained. Cock-fighting and horse-racing were the ordinary amusements of that age, and she could not have kept Tudor from them altogether, even had she tried. Still, she would have been better pleased if he had found them less necessary to his existence.

Riding through the fields on their way to the race, it was accident and not malice this time that brought the two young gentlemen abreast of a fair-haired figure working away at his hoe with the rest. Tudor uttered a startled ejaculation as he saw him.

Vindicated as he had been in his right to correct a refractory servant, if he so chose, Tudor was in a gracious frame of mind. He would not have admitted, of course, that certain things this same servant had said to him—things which had called in question his possession of a single generous instinct, for instance—had the power to mortify him. All the same they had stung him to the quick. And he determined to show this carping felon how mistaken he was.

He drew rein at Anthony's side. To his unutterable surprise he found himself not altogether easy in the encounter. He caught himself wishing that the other would in some way acknowledge his presence. But when this very thing happened, the calm raillery of the bow he received disconcerted him.

He nodded slightly in return, ignoring the raillery for Mr. Beverley's benefit. "After

your yesterday's chastisement, Mr. Slaughter should have suffered you to lay up," he said, with patronising good nature. "You may tell him from me that I have excused your tasks for to-day."

He rode on, whistling gaily, although to an experienced ear the gaiety sounded a little forced.

"I don't hold with being too severe on the rascals," he remarked loftily. "Once they've been thoroughly broken in and taught to know their place, they will always find a kind master in me. Isn't that so, Ephra'm?"

"Yes, Mars' Tudor," answered Ephra'm docilely, but without enthusiasm.

Young Mr. Beverley, who made no protestations, but who had never laid a hand on a servant, black or white, in his life, and for whom his own negro boy would have gone to the stake, permitted himself a silent grin.

Coming back from the races before sundown, Mr. Beverley manifested a wish to return by the same route they had come.

"Why?" asked Tudor, who had been suggesting that they should go round to the house by another way.

"Oh, just a whim," answered his friend.

But when they reached the field, and, as before, found a fair-haired figure working away at his hoe with the rest, he did not seem altogether astonished.

Spurring his horse, Tudor rode at a gallop across the field to Mr. Slaughter. "I bade the new hand tell you that he had my leave to

knock off work for to-day," he said, haughtily.

"He said naught to me about it," answered Mr. Slaughter, but without adding any of those expressions of surprise which Tudor felt would have been becoming to the occasion.

He rode over, though at a slower pace, to Anthony himself. "I excused you your tasks for to-day," he said shortly.

"I understood you to do me that honour," the other told him politely.

"Then why did you not accept my favour?" demanded the young master.

Anthony smiled—a little still smile—and turned back to his hoe.

Tudor rode off considerably sobered.

CHAPTER XII

MADAM'S BIRTHDAY DINNER

It was May, and the world was a scented one. Sweet-smelling flowers bloomed in every garden patch, and fragrant creepers climbed round every cabin. The pinkish-white blossoms of the laurel perfumed the dells, while in the valley the blooms of the locust trees made the air balmy with their sweets. The forest was a bouquet of jasmine blooms. From the low moist places of the swamp, honeysuckles wafted a delicious fragrance.

"Bob White!" sang the faithful little partridge from the low bough of a tree, to cheer his sitting mate. The wild turkey hen, though she had already built her nest and laid her red-dotted eggs, had no such solace. She sat as silent as the grave, her anxious mother-eyes ever watchful to guard her coming brood from her jealous spouse who, had he discovered them, would certainly have destroyed them. Other eggs of a very different kind, very hard and large and white, had already been deposited by the female alligator, in a nest among the underbrush the water's edge in that swamp.

The exquisite green of the new foliage was

in every bough and branch. The fields were white with marguerites, and in the woods the yellowish-green head of the moccasin flower had already made its appearance. Thrushes and meadow-larks and red-birds poured forth their sweetest notes, while every now and then a pæan of victory from the thicket told that a mocking-bird had just waged a successful battle with its enemy the black snake.

It was May. And the young people of Virginia found life a pleasant place. Stern as was parental discipline when it came to any question of disobedience or undutiful conduct, it rarely extended to the exaction of any very fixed routine in study. Boys and girls lived an open-air life with their elders, and many a gay barge laden with pleasure-seekers had drawn up to the landing-stage this spring, to bear Madam and her children off to some merry picnic or festivity. On these excursions the gentlemen all went armed, since the Genitoes still prowled in the distant woods, while Blackbeard ravaged along the creeks.

It was May. And the hands on Madam's plantation sweated and toiled. For this was the month in which the tobacco and the corn had both to be planted. In consequence, Mr. Slaughter set every soul on the place to work, and drove them hard.

The corn was planted in the fashion which the first white settlers had learned from the Indians. The corn-fields were divided into squares, and into the crossing of each furrow four grains of corn were dropped. As they

toiled you could hear the negroes singing the old-time song :—

“Four grains ob corn to be planted in de hill,
One for de blackbird, one for de crow,
One for de cubworm,
And one to grow.”

The tobacco planting came next. For this the fields were divided into hillocks, and when the cleared grounds were soft with the first rains, the plants were drawn from them by experienced hands and carried to the fields. A hole was then made in the top of each hillock with the fingers, into which the plant was carefully set.

It was May, and Madam's birthday. To celebrate it a great dinner was always given at Pine Mount to the neighbouring gentry, while the servants on the plantation received special rations. Madam gave many dinner-parties in the course of the year, of course, but this birthday dinner was a very special affair indeed. Tudor had been present at the two previous ones, but this was the first time Madam had judged Joyce old enough to make one of the company. This year, too, in view of the fact that they were growing up too, Madam had extended the invitation to her daughter's young friends, Molly Ball, and Susie and Bob Carter. Even Evelyn was allowed to attend, partly because she was staying in the house, partly because Joyce pleaded so hard for her.

And on the very morning of the dinner-party, when the Great House was in all the

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agonies of preparing for the great event, and every living soul was being pressed into the service, what should Quambo, the tallest and best-looking of Madam's black footmen do, but tumble from the chair on which he was reaching up to place the myrtleberry candles in the high sconces, and sprain his ankle. Casting about her in despair for someone to take his place, Madam was minded of the tall young Englishman, whose services she could now command.

Anthony was busy scooping out a hole on the top of a hillock to receive a plant which a little negro had just brought him from the cleared grounds, when Mr. Slaughter came up to him.

"That clumsy shote, Sambo, up at the house, has sprained his ankle, and Madam has sent for you to take his place in waiting on the gentry to-day," the overseer told him without comment.

The resentful colour flooded Anthony's face. "I would rather choose to do my tasks in the field," he said shortly.

"I'll be bound you would, lad," answered the overseer. "But in your situation you can't choose. So be off with you!"

He turned on his heel and then came back. "There's an old saying, lad, but a true one, that what can't be cured must be endured," he observed. "And mind you, Madam has as proper a claim to your services in the house as in the field. You'd be in the wrong to make a rout about it!"

"Madam has an unequalled delicacy in pressing her claims! Still, I shall not make a rout, Mr. Slaughter," answered Anthony, and the overseer saw that the boy had got himself in hand again.

The long dining-table in the hall was covered with a fine damask cloth, which Joyce and Evelyn, under Madam's direction, were decorating with artificial flowers and little images.

"How elegantly could we arrange the table if you would suffer us to adorn it with real flowers, mamma," cried Joyce eagerly.

"Such a decoration would not be fitting, daughter, for so formal a dinner-party as this," Madam answered her, and Joyce stifled a sigh as she arranged the artificial monstrosities to the best of her ability.

Anthony waited some time at the threshold of the door before Madam noticed him. He waited still longer before it was her pleasure to beckon him to her. When she did so he never once glanced in the direction of the daughter of the house.

It was the first time Madam had seen him since the scene on the porch. He had had a sharp lesson. But it seemed to have had its effect, if the extreme quietude with which he now obeyed the summons of her gemmed hand were anything to go by.

"I shall require you to wait at table to-day," said Madam, in her autocratic way.

"Yes, Madam," answered the boy.

"You will go to Pharaoh, and let him in-

struct you in your duties," Madam continued.

"Yes, Madam," answered the boy again.

"Have you waited at the table of people of condition ere now?" demanded Madam.

"No, Madam. Yet methinks I shall know how to conduct myself," was the suave reply.

"To what occupation were you bred up in England, then?" asked Madam, with some real curiosity.

"In Virginia, Madam, I am bred up to work on your tobacco fields, or when you entertain company, to act as their lacquey," returned Anthony, a tinge of bitter mockery in his voice.

"I said in England, sir," Madam reminded him.

"So I understood, Madam," answered the boy, his bow polite, his eyes baffling.

"Can nothing control your unruly spirit, sirrah?" asked Madam, with severity.

"You should know, if anyone, Madam," answered Anthony calmly. "Doubtless in your overseer's whip you have not exhausted your means of finding out."

Madam's eyes flashed. Evidently the lesson had not been as effective as she had supposed. But with her dinner-party so near at hand, this was no time to bandy words with her new henchman. She sent for Pharaoh.

"Induct this boy into his duties as footman, Pharaoh," she said. "He is to take Quambo's place and wear his livery."

Having thus delivered herself, Madam dis-

missed the whole matter from her mind and turned to more serious affairs.

Madam's liveries, which were only worn on rare occasions, were very gorgeous. They were of dark blue, trimmed with silver lace and cord. Incidentally, they were the pride of old Pharaoh's heart.

If Anthony found anything to object to in having to don Quambo's clothes, he made no sign. He doffed his own and put them on under Pharaoh's directions.

"My! Yo' does look mighty fine!" said the old butler admiringly. "Yo' sholy am de right pusson to show off our fambly libery."

"Well, that's something to have voyaged to Virginia for!" returned Anthony, but with a note of kindness in his mocking voice that Uncle Pharaoh's white folks would have waited a long time before hearing from him.

"De time yo' h'ist up yo' head dat ar way, chile, it's laik I'd seen yo' befo'," said the old man suddenly. "In dat blue coat wid de silber fixins yo' mind me ob' somebody mo' an' mo'."

"Perhaps Quambo?" suggested Anthony gravely.

But the old man shook his head, and with the puzzled frown still on his face, began to instruct the boy how to comport himself in his new and onerous position.

Very splendid looked Madam as she stood to receive her company that day, in her trailing watered tabby gown and floating scarf. And very splendid was Madam's company,

the ladies in their rustling brocades and carved ivory fans, and jewelled hand-rings: the gentlemen with ruffled shirts and long embroidered waistcoats, and buckles at knee and instep. 'Tis true the fashions which the ships had brought from England were a few months old, but except for that, no London assembly could have shown a braver front.

"Oh, Joyce!" Susie Carter's voice was full of a frank disappointment the moment she caught sight of her friend. "I did think that for this once Madam would have suffered you to put up your ringlets, and have your hair craped high, like Molly Ball's and mine. And you haven't even a cap, nor a ribbon, nor a flower in it neither!"

Here Miss Carter squirmed herself in her tightly-corded bodice, and managed to get in a surreptitious but wholly appreciative glance at the richly-brocaded ribbon interwoven with her own highly-craped coiffure, in one of the mirrors on the wall.

Little Evelyn Byrd, looking as ethereal as an angel, in her gown of fine cambric, with its muslin apron and costly lace tucker, squeezed Joyce's hand consolingly as she heard. Joyce stooped to kiss the soft little flushed face, before turning to laugh at her preening young friend.

"In truth, Susie, I was only too glad to 'scape the craping," she told her, with obvious sincerity. "And I was prodigious pleased, too, to hear my mamma tell mammy that there is no occasion for me to roll up my hair

until I am presented to his Excellency in the autumn."

"My dearest Joyce looks very well as she is," observed Molly Ball, the loyal.

Miss Ball herself was looking rarely beautiful. Her craped hair was rolled up on each side and held in its place by golden bodkins. No flush or pallor disturbed the ripe colouring of her peach-bloom cheeks. Now, as always, she was calm and simply sure of herself.

The hall presented a resplendent appearance when Pharaoh, with an inimitable air, announced that Madam was served, and the company trooped in two and two from the chamber, Madam on the arm of Mr. Justice Carter of Corotoman. The floor was of polished oak, on which the high-heeled shoes of the ladies clicked pleasantly as they walked. It was three o'clock of the afternoon, and the spring sunshine lit up the family portraits on the panelled walls, and brought into sharp relief the blades of ancient swords and cutlasses and the barrels of pistols.

The table was laden with silver plate, and the open cupboards on each side of the fireplace were a-shine with the same precious material. Flagons and beakers and porringers were there in profusion, stamped with the Rolleston coat-of-arms. But the ancient stirrup-cup on the sideboard bore a prouder crest than any of the Rollestons could boast, since it had come to Madam as an heirloom from her own noble English ancestry.

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It was too warm for fires now, and the open hearth of the carved oaken chimney-piece was filled with fresh-cut cedar boughs. Over the mantelpiece hung the treasure of the house, the portrait of Madam's dead kinsman, the young Duke of Whitby, who had fallen at Naseby. It was a copy of the famous picture painted by Vandyke, of which the original hung on the ducal walls of Whitby Castle in Yorkshire.

On Madam's sideboard, in crystal flagons were costly French and Rhenish wines, and old Madeira that had crossed the ocean three times to improve its flavour. On Madam's table were the finest viands the world could produce, superbly cooked and dressed by that most peerless of kitchen deities, Aunt Hebe.

The dinner itself was almost indescribable. After soup of an incomparable excellence, came fish of every kind, freshly caught from the bay—crabs and oysters, bass, perch, sheeps-heads, shad, mullet, white salmon, lampreys and the royal sturgeon. Meats followed—haunches of venison, saddles of mutton, barons of beef, and that inevitable dish, appearing on every table of the Old Dominion, the unequalled Virginian ham. As for poultry, there were roast fowls and capons, roast and boiled turkeys, while for those who cared for such everyday fare, ducks and wildfowl. Nor was there any stint of vegetables, sweet and Irish potatoes, forced peas and asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, besides a number of sallet flowers,

such as Indian cresses, red buds and saffras tops. As for the pastry, Aunt Hebe's tarts and apple-pies were admittedly a dream, while having nothing in modern times with which to compare her creams and jellies and syllabubs, we must leave them to the reader's imagination. The dessert was on the same scale, and included oranges and lemons, almonds and raisins, and prunes, imported from the West Indies and the Azores, besides every variety of Virginian fruits and nuts.

There was no more careful hostess than Madam in all Virginia. But so polished, so easy, so free from care was her manner, that no one realised how large a share she was taking in the direction of the banquet. But between her own and Pharaoh's efforts, her guests found themselves being served with admirable judgment and tact. And the quiet white servant, whose fair face made such a contrast to the rest of Madam's footmen, did his part well. Hour after hour, through that interminable dinner, he handed the dishes, changed the plates and poured the wines, and did whatever else was required of him with admirable patience and assiduity.

Mr. Fauce had recognised him at an early stage of the proceedings, and had followed his movements with an amused malice. He had also been at some pains to give him authoritative orders, such as "Here, fellow, another glass of Madeira!" or "A fresh fork, sirrah!" and the like.

But if the master of Green Briars hoped to goad Madam's new footman into any open manifestation of temper, he was disappointed. Anthony poured out Mr. Fauce's wine, and changed his plate with the same impassive face with which he restored her fallen napkin to the little daughter of the house. Had Mr. Slaughter been present, he would certainly have endorsed the fact that whatever else the boy was doing he was certainly not "making a rout."

The conversation round the dinner-table was, on the whole, gay and lively, though every now and then serious things were touched upon. The Genitoes were mentioned, but the gentlemen present let the subject drop, reserving certain grisly stories of these gentry until after the ladies had retired. On the subject of Blackbeard they were more expansive. That demoniacal personage always fascinated the Virginians.

"Has anyone here present actually seen the monster in action?" enquired the Rev. Mr. Swann.

"Those who see Blackbeard in action, sir, do not live to tell the tale," answered the judge gravely. "But even in time of peace he is a terrifying spectacle, with his flowing black beard and the piercing wildness of his eye."

"They say his greatest diversion, when he is not fighting, is to assemble his crew round his hospitable board, and taking a pistol in each hand, to blow out the candle, and fire at

them under the table. This he calls 'taking pot luck with him.' Yet such is the awe his followers have of him, that they durst not refuse his invitations, although some of them have been maimed for life in the sport," related Mr. Robert Beverley, the historian, who was one of the guests.

"They say, too, that there is always one more soul among his crew than was ever shipped," added someone else, significantly. "Someone who whispers devilish counsels in his ear while he is about his bloody business, and who disappears no man knows where, when it is over."

"See, I have peeled you a walnut, my little Evelyn," said Joyce across the table to the paling child, who, together with the rest of the young people, had been listening intently to these edifying narratives.

In her anxiety to divert the little girl's mind from the gruesome subject, Joyce's voice had carried further than she knew, and some of their elders turned to look at the group of children at the bottom of the table. Evelyn's expression was so terrified that Joyce's manœuvre was patent to everyone.

"Joyce is ever thoughtful," said kind Madam Carter, appreciatively, "and, to be sure, such stories are fairly terrifying for such a little maid as Evelyn."

"What a fair child it is!" remarked Mr. Jacques Fontaine, watching Evelyn revive under Joyce's petting, like a drooping flower after rain.

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"Her mother was the greatest toast in Virginia, sir," Madam told him. "And when her husband, our valued friend, Colonel Byrd of Westover, who is at present in England, presented her at the Court, the King was graciously pleased to enquire if there were many other as beautiful birds in the forest of America."

"His Majesty would see his answer before him, were he here to-night," observed Mr. Fauce, gallantly. His bow included all the ladies, but almost unconsciously to himself his eye went in the direction not of a craped, but of a ringleted head at the bottom of the table.

There were many toasts drunk that evening. After Church and King had been duly pledged, the health of Governor Spotswood was called and drunk with three times three. Judge Carter gave "Madam Rolleston," and after that followed many private and personal toasts, each guest being called on for one in turn. Mr. Fauce gave "The loveliest of her sex," and many of the guests glancing in Joyce's direction were amused to see the little girl drinking the toast in mint julep, in serene unconsciousness. Then someone gave a pledge which always gratified proud Madame Rolleston, and called on everyone to drink the health of "Madam's ducal family in England."

The toast made several of the guests look up at the famous portrait that hung over the mantelpiece.

"The young duke fell at Naseby, did he not, Madam?" asked Mr. Fontaine deferentially.

"Yes, sir," answered Madam. "He died fighting for his Majesty King Charles the First, of ever blessed and glorious memory. Our house has no more cherished memory. That picture was painted by Vandyke, the year he fell. He was only eighteen then."

The pictured face of the young English duke looked down at Madam's guests from the wainscotted walls of old Virginia. It was a beautiful face: very pale and proud. Fair hair fell upon the pointed lace collar and dark blue of the doublet; the mouth was hard, but beautifully cut; the eyes of a strange sapphire blue were hard, too. But the wonder of the picture lay not so much in what it represented as in the possibilities it revealed. Were the eyes to soften and the mouth to smile, such a change might make it a face of dreams.

Old Pharaoh, who always took an intelligent interest in the conversation of his white folks, and sometimes joined in it, looked up at the picture with the rest. Then the cut-glass decanter he was holding in his hand fell to the floor with a crash. The next moment brother Joseph, with his eyes half starting from his head, had murmured, "Gracious powers!" so loudly that all could hear him. Everybody followed the direction of his gaze.

Exactly underneath the picture stood a boy in a blue coat with silver lacings. Fair

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hair fell about a pale, proud face. His hard mouth was beautifully cut. With eyes of a strange sapphire blue he gave the staring company back an unsmiling gaze. Save for the difference in the fashioning in the dress, he might have stepped from the picture frame itself.

Madam's guests sat spellbound. What Madam herself thought in that first moment, when the resemblance between her honoured ancestor and her felon servant was forced upon her notice, will never be known. But so distinct was her voice that every word could be heard, even at the bottom of the table, as she turned to Judge Carter and said,

"You were supping last week with Governor Spotswood at the Palace, were you not, sir? How does his Excellency? All here will be pleased to know."

Dearly as the Virginians prized their soldier Governor, sure never before had his health been made such a subject of fervent enquiry amongst them as it was with Madam's guests now. Everyone present felt that they had been betrayed into an involuntary rudeness towards their hostess, in openly showing that they perceived the undoubted likeness that existed between the flower of her race and the boy who waited in footman's livery at her table. Madam's manner was too perfect to admit a shade of resentment to her guests. But there was that in it that made the subject a closed one, both now and at any future time between them.

In due season Madam gave the signal and withdrew with the ladies to the chamber, leaving the gentlemen to their tobacco and wine. With her rigorous code anent the duties of a hostess, it was quite a little time before she permitted herself to leave them even for a moment. When she did she sent for Pharaoh.

"Let the English servant come to me in the porch," she ordered.

Madam's dinner-party had begun at three, and it was now long after sundown. In the hall, and the chamber, the servants had already begun to light the candles. A flight of crows with harsh and croaking cries flew overhead as Madam waited. Pink and grey hawk-moths flitted about in the twilight breeze. Once a bat almost brushed her cheek.

"You sent for me, Madam?" said a quiet voice, and Madam turned to find her young footman standing before her.

"What is your name, fellow?" asked Madam, without any preamble.

"Anthony, Madam," was the answer.

"But your other name?" Madam persisted.

"I have no other name," the boy told her. Then while Madam stood gazing at him silently he added, "I came to you as the stranger within your gates, Madam. You best know with what kindness you have used me."

But Madam's curiosity overtopped even her anger.

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"Is it because you fear to shame your English kinsfolk that you withhold your name?" she asked.

"Perhaps, Madam," said the calm young voice, "or it might even be that, poor convict as I am, I am too proud to claim kinship with those whom I despise."

"Your name, sirrah?" cried Madam harshly.

"Anthony, Madam!" answered the boy.

CHAPTER XIII

A PEEP INTO THE FUTURE

In the chamber the servants were setting out the tables for cards. And until the gentlemen chose to put in an appearance, Madam's lady guests were gossiping and tattling. They had already discussed servants and caps and scarves, and were now engaged in relating a scandalous story of how a young married woman of their acquaintance had invited herself to the house of the pastor, and there encouraged his young daughter to continue a dance which she was giving, unknown to her parent, until after twelve o'clock on Saturday evening. For this, as was now the common talk in Virginia, she had been arraigned before the vestry, and sharply admonished. What punishment befell miss at the hands of her justly incensed parent, although not definitely stated, could be guessed at. The Virginians were the most Sabbath-keeping people in the world, and Madam's guests seemed to be of the opinion that, deep as was the disgrace which had fallen on the young married lady, she had got no more than she deserved. "And a proud woman she always was, and wore fringes at

the binding of her petticoat," observed one of the ladies in spiteful reminiscence.

The gentlemen in the hall, smoking Madam's "Sweet-scented" or "Oroonoko," and discussing her Fayal and Madeira, had sterner subjects for their discourse. A whole frontier family had just been murdered by the Genitoes under circumstances of atrocious cruelty, and the probabilities of a fresh Militia muster being called out against them were eagerly discussed. Then there was a report of which everyone was full, of how a certain well-known gentleman, having failed to keep his appointment to fight a duel, had had his glove nailed to the State-House by his antagonist, for a lasting disgrace to himself and his family. And among lighter topics of conversation was an almost unheard-of piece of presumption on the part of a tailor, who had actually dared to run his horse in a heat against the horses of gentlemen! The rascal had been heavily fined for his insolence by the Courts, and serve him right! Old Virginia was not the place in which any levelling practices of that kind could be indulged in with impunity.

In the chamber, Joyce and her young friends had sat on their low stools, with folded hands, dutifully listening to the discourse of their elders, without venturing to join in. In the hall, Tudor, and Mr. Beverley the younger, and Bob Carter, had remained in duty bound at the table until the older gentlemen thought proper to rise

and join the ladies. But when this happy arrangement had been effected the young people gaily and naturally congregated together on the porch. Here, Mr. Fauce, and Mr. Jacques Fontaine, and brother Joseph, for reasons best known to themselves, joined them.

The night was still and warm. But now, as always, the aguish evening breeze from the river made the air dangerous.

"I pray you, madam, to drape your scarf more closely round your shoulders," murmured Mr. Fauce, who was in close attendance on the daughter of the house.

A hint of something possessive in his manner angered Joyce. "Indeed, I am not cold, sir," she answered distantly.

"But if I insist, madam?" persevered Mr. Fauce, half playfully, half in the tone of one who has a right to do so if he chooses.

"Insist?" Joyce's tone was full of proud resentment, while Bob Carter snorted audibly. "I shall ever think your choice of words a strange one, sir," she added, with a rebellious hitch of her shoulder, that displaced the scarf still further, and left the pretty neck and the dimpled childish arms in their elbow sleeves bare to the air.

Practical Molly Ball turned to remonstrate with her rash young friend. But the sight of Joyce's mutinous face stopped the words on her tongue. Mr. Jacques Fontaine created a diversion.

"I saw that strange woman whom they call

Wild Nance of the Swamp enter your house to-day, madam," he observed to Joyce. "Is it true, think you, that as some say, she is a witch, and has dealings with the devil?"

"On the contrary, sir, she is all goodness," answered Joyce, forgetting everything in her eagerness to defend the maligned Nance. "People who are sick or in trouble go to her for miles around. She lodges in a little cabin on the edge of the swamp, and all the birds and beasts of the forest are her friends, and come at her call. My maid, Sukey, and I often visit her there. It is sweet to see the little blue-birds and robins feeding out of her hand."

"Still, she tells fortunes, Joyce—you know she does," protested Susie Carter. Then a sudden idea striking her, she added, "She will mind you, Joyce, more than anyone. And if she is here to-night, will you not urge her to tell us ours?"

"Oh, prithee do, dear Joyce," pleaded little Evelyn excitedly. "I should vastly like to know if they will be kind to me at my English school, and how long it will be before my papa will suffer me to return to you again."

"In truth it would be an agreeable diversion," agreed brother Joseph. "They say the woman hath wondrous powers of seeing into the future."

"I don't believe any one can see in to the future. And I don't think there are such people as witches, neither," muttered Bob Carter.

"Oh, Bob!" came in a shocked murmur from all sides, while Brother Joseph reminded him reprovably that not so very many years since in Princess Anne County, a noted witch, Grace Sherwood by name, had actually been put in the river, to see if she would sink or swim.

"Nance has had an ill-will towards me since the day I sent a charge of duck-shot into her house cat," confessed Tudor. "But Joyce can do anything with her. Will you try your persuasions on her now, sister?"

Joyce's eyes were dancing. There was a spice of adventure in the plan which fascinated her. "With all my heart—if the idea is agreeable to our guests," she said, with a polite smile of interrogation at the others, which proved her her mother's daughter.

The idea was more than agreeable to them all, and Tudor went to find out if the woman was still in the house. Making his way to the hall, he called Pharaoh to him.

"Mr. Beverley saw Wild Nance enter the house to-day, Uncle Pharaoh," he said. "Is she still here?"

"Yes, Mars' Tudor," answered Pharaoh, "she sholy is. Ole mist'is done told Hebe gib her plenty chicken meat and co'n pone, to tote back wid her. She been waitin' dis blessed while in de kitchen, quiet lak, till Hebe de time to 'tend to her."

"The kitchen? Why, that's the very place!" cried Tudor. "Bid Aunt Hebe keep her there till we come."

As he spoke his eye fell on the young English footman who was helping Pharaoh to rearrange the table for the cold collation with which Madam's guests would finish up the evening. It would be hard to say what impulse moved Tudor to act in the way he did now. Perhaps the incident of the picture had impressed him uncomfortably; perhaps certain remarks Anthony had made on the subject of generosity occurred to his mind. At any rate, he threw him a careless word of praise.

"You waited at the table more than common well to-day," he said graciously.

"I am obliged to you, sir!" said Anthony.

In spite of himself Tudor looked pleased. So the fellow had really capitulated at last. He was more gratified than he could have supposed possible at such a trifle, and in high good humour he went to the sideboard and poured the boy out a glass of wine with his own hand. "There!" he said affably, "this is to reward you for your good behaviour. Drink it down, and never say again that in me you have not a kind master."

Anthony took the glass in his hand. "My humble service to my master!" he said, his voice unruffled. Then with his challenging eyes on Tudor's face, he turned the glass down, and let the contents trickle in a slow stream on the polished floor.

Tudor turned white. For the minute he drummed his fist with helpless rage on a

corner of the sideboard. Then without a word he left the hall. He was profoundly thankful that no one except himself had been present at the scene.

"Wild Nance is in the kitchen," he said, returning to his company. "What say you to going to her there? We should be freer for our diversions," he added with a significant glance into the lighted chamber, where Madam's older guests had already settled themselves to cards.

The suggestion met with general approval, and with gay cries of assent the young people prepared to set out, Mr. Fauce, brother Joseph, and Mr. Jacques Fontaine condescending to accompany them.

But Joyce, who had glanced into the chamber, too, judged it more mannerly and dutiful to gain permission. She slipped over to her mother's side.

"Nance is here, mamma," she said, "and we all would have her tell us our fortunes. Have we your leave to go to her in the kitchen?"

"Foolish children!" said Madam, indulgently. But it had not escaped her notice that Mr. Fauce, leaving cards to the elder guests, had elected to pass his evening with the young people. Concluding that he would constitute himself Joyce's cavalier, she gave a smiling assent to what she naturally supposed was to be a mere innocent frolic. Had she known what was really going to happen, her assent would have been less ready.

The kitchen at Pine Mount, as was the way in those days, was situated at some distance from the house. This was partly to keep the house itself sweet and cool and free from the savours of cooking, partly to minimise the dangers of fire, the negroes then, as always, being incredibly careless in this particular. In consequence Madam sent for Pharaoh and bade him tell one of the footmen whom he could trust to take one of the branched silver candlesticks from the table and light the party on their way.

The old butler went back to the hall cogitating. Then he touched Anthony on the sleeve.

"Look heah, chile!" he observed. "Ole mist'is done say you is to take one ob dese yer candlesticks, an' light de young ladies an' gen'lemans to de kitchen."

"Did Madam expressly name me?" asked Anthony. It was the first hint of resistance he had given during the whole day.

"She p'int'ly did!" answered Pharaoh. "Leastways arter de likely way yo' hab tuk holt ob yo' work to-day, chile, yo' des de sorter pusson I kin trust wid mah silber candlestick an' mah lil' Miss Joyce!"

"When I want a recommendation for my next place, Pharaoh, I'll come to you!" Anthony told him, the mockery in his voice of a very different order to the bitter sarcasm he had just levelled in Tudor's direction. But he took the candlestick with its lighted myrtleberry candles from Pharaoh's hand,

and stood waiting with it at the door, without further demur.

The young ladies and gentlemen came out, at last, in a little laughing cluster. It was an adventure, and they were all young and light-hearted. But naughty Joyce, for Mr. Fauce's benefit, held her scarf in her hand, her ringletted head high, her eyes defiant. River mists or not, he should see how much weight the wishes of a person who had presumed to "insist" that she should carry them out, were going to have with her.

Mr. Fauce, whose eyes missed nothing that Joyce ever did, looked at her in angry displeasure. Seeing which, Miss Rolleston ostentatiously trailed her scarf—it was a sea-green furbelow one, worked with gold—on the path beside her, in a way that would have scandalised her careful mother had she seen it. Highly offended, Mr. Fauce detached himself from her side and moved on ahead.

The footman carrying the candlestick might be lighting the path of all the ladies and gentlemen committed to his charge. But an impartial observer might have noticed that Miss Rolleston's little red-heeled shoes trod in a continual line of light. Along this the fringed end of the scarf danced wickedly. The footman stooped and picked it up.

"Your scarf, madam," he said deferentially.

Joyce started at the sound of his voice. "Sir, I thank you," she said, "but I am not wearing my scarf to-night."

The tall young footman may have noticed that here, before all her friends, Miss Rolleston spoke to him in the same way in which she had spoken in his poor cabin, when there was none but the faithful Mammy to hear—and that way was as to an equal. She made a little motion of her hand for him to relinquish his hold on the scarf. Instead he held it fast, keeping pace at her side.

"With submission, madam," he said, "the river air is chill, and you are lightly clad."

Madam's new footman might say "with submission" but even Mr. Fauce's "insist" could not match the masterfulness of his tone. Joyce's lovely eyes opened wide.

"I said I was not wearing my scarf to-night, sir," she said. There was anger in her voice, but it was the same anger she would have shown to one of the young gallants about her, had they dared to act in the same way.

The two had dropped a step or two behind the others. Anthony shifted the candlestick, and the next moment, to her immeasurable surprise, Miss Rolleston found her scarf being drawn round her little bare neck deftly and decisively by his disengaged hand.

A small red heel scrunched into the sand in a way that must have considerably impaired its polish. Then, "I shall take it off again, sir," declared the little girl defiantly.

"In that case, madam, I should be under the necessity of readjusting it!" said her footman.

"Who is the best judge, sir, of what a maid

should wear—you or I?" demanded Miss Rolleston with elaborate sarcasm, when she could speak.

"In this instance I am, madam," said the individual who made her path for her, stalking grimly at her side, with a wary eye on the end of the scarf which Miss Rolleston's exasperated fingers ever threatened to fling wide—and ever stopped short of doing so.

Arrived at the kitchen, Aunt Hebe received them graciously. Had they invaded her territory earlier in the day they would have been sent off with scant ceremony. But now that the birthday dinner had been added to the list of great and successful achievements, she felt herself able to relax into sociability. She bade her kitchen wenches set stools and benches, and then with the aid of a loblolly stick and a few pregnant remarks, cleared her kitchen of all save a few aged and valued negroes of both sexes, who, being too old to work, had made it their permanent home and who were treated with respect and affection by the whole household. At any stage of the dinner, by the way, had Madam's guests chanced to look up, they would have seen the doorway occupied by one or more of these elderly magnates, all deeply and childishly interested in the proceedings. It would never have occurred to Madam, or any other Virginian hostess, to reprove them for the liberty. Without the kindly black faces, life in old Virginia would have been a far less pleasant thing than it was

Aunt Hebe's kitchen was of enormous dimensions. The great fireplace could easily roast a whole ox, and had indeed done so when "ole mist'is" came from her plantation on York river, as a bride, as also on that never-to-be-forgotten occasion when the young heir of the Rollestons had been born. It would do so again, you may be sure, on their Miss Joyce's wedding day.

In front of the fireplace hung a great iron spit, furnished with many rods, on which haunches of venison, saddles of mutton, and stuffed turkeys could be roasted at the same time. The swinging iron pot had boiled many a succulent Virginian ham, while the skillet, that indispensable article of old-time cookery, held in itself the memories of matchless stews.

Joyce and Tudor had always loved the kitchen. Many and many a cosy evening had they spent there popping corn and roasting chesnuts and sweet potatoes and listening with never failing interest to the stories of how the unscrupulous, but wholly fascinating rabbit, had managed to outwit the whole of the furred and feathered tribe.

At one corner of the fireplace this evening sat a woman with a remarkable face. It was tanned, and wrinkled, and very old. But it bore a look of indomitable strength, and the deep-set eyes still burnt with sunken fires. It was a face which had known tragedy, although no one in Virginia knew, or ever was to know, what had been the woman's

history before she became an indented servant, served out her time faithfully, and then betook herself to the wild life of the woods.

"We have come for you to tell us our fortunes, Nance," said Tudor, in his peremptory way.

"There's many come to me for that. But there's few to whom I grant the favour," answered the woman, slightly. It was plain to be seen that here was one who did not share Tudor's good opinion of himself.

Joyce came to her side, and laid her hand on her knee. "You are to do nothing you are averse to, Nance," she said. "But an it would be agreeable to you to tell us our fortunes, we should all be vastly pleased."

The old woman smiled at the sound of her voice. Then she looked into the grey eyes and a startled look came into her own. She lifted the hand on her knee, and laid her thumb on the pulse-beat. Mr. Fauce moved forward with a dramatic air of protection. But Joyce waved him back impatiently.

"Why, Nance is my friend!" she said; "she wouldn't harm me for the world. We have always been attached to one another, since the time I was a tiny babe, haven't we, Nance?"

"Yes, little one," answered Nance gently, "and because of that, and because you seek me at a time when your name is being scribed in the book of fate, I will do what you ask. Reach me a gourd half filled with water, and

then let all who would know the future sit round me in a semi-circle."

The visitors, a little awed in spite of themselves, obeyed. Aunt Hebe and the rest of the kitchen aristocracy gathered round to listen, as a matter of course.

Wild Nance set the half-filled gourd on the ground in front of her. Then from a buckskin pouch at her side she took out various strange objects—the merrythought of a fowl; a withered, evil-smelling thing that had once been a skunk-cabbage; a dried moccasin flower that looked as though it might lift up its head like its venomous namesake, and strike; a snake skin; and the left hind foot of a rabbit. These she arranged in a circle round the gourd.

"Extinguish all light save that of the logs and the candles. And let him who beareth the candlestick draw nearer with it," she ordered.

Aunt Hebe extinguished the flaming pine-wood torches on the walls. The logs glowed in the cavernous depths of the fireplace, casting weird shadows round the silent semi-circle. The furthest extremities of the vast apartment were in pitchy darkness. The candles in Anthony's hand seemed to burn with a bluer flame than before. Little Evelyn sought for Joyce's hand.

From another pouch, woven by herself out of silk-grass, Wild Nance took a handful of leaves from the black birch and threw them on the fire, where they burnt with a spicity,

aromatic odour. Then she bruised the leaves of the sweet gum between her hands, till their searching fragrance filled the air.

From yet another pouch—one rich with beading and wampum, that had belonged to a dead Indian chief—the old woman next took a handful of salt, and cast it on the fire. An unearthly blue flame played about the logs, rendering the countenances of the spectators ghastly to behold. Then—but from where she got it they could not tell—Nance flung something not bigger than a water-melon seed into the heart of the flames, and as they waited, scarce knowing what they expected, a faint haze spread and deepened about her, till it separated her from them like a veil.

“Let him who would hear his fortune, advance!” said Nance, in a voice that sounded a long way off.

There was a slight hesitation among the spectators. Then Mr. Fauce, as the oldest person among them, stepped into the breach.

“And what has the future in store for me, my good woman?” he said lightly.

“Give me your hand!” Nance ordered.

The haze around her deepened, and when Mr. Fauce stretched forth his hand it seemed actually enveloped in mist. Nothing could be seen of Nance save the points of her ears, which were cast forward like an elk’s.

“Listen!” she said, and through the distance, not only Mr. Fauce, but every soul present heard a little mewing sound.

"What do you hear?" asked Nance.

"I hearnaught," answered Mr. Fauce, "save the mewing of a house cat, which, sure, can have no concern in the present mummery."

"I jes' don't like dat sort ob house cat," observed Aunt Hebe significantly.

"'Tis the cry of the panther," Nance told him solemnly, "and from its soft voice none could guess the savageness of its nature." Still holding the gentleman's wrist she looked long and earnestly into the water in the gourd. "I see the fierce creature, now," she said, her eyes blind to the world. "He is on the track of a noble buck. He harries him in the spring-time when he is weak and defenceless, and follows him in close pursuit through the forests and swamps. But when he at last gains on him, the buck's horns have grown, and he is in the pride of his strength. He tosses the panther as though he had been a featherweight, and only spares to trample him under his feet from very scorn."

"Read me your riddle, good woman," cried Mr. Fauce.

"Nay, that you must e'en do for yourself," Nance told him. "I can only impart what I see."

"Well, you need expect no bounty from me for this!" exclaimed Mr. Fauce, angrily.

"I *take* no bounty—even from those I like," smiled Nance, calmly. "Who comes to me next?"

"I will, if I may," said Molly Ball, stepping forward in all her sweet serenity. She

stretched out her hand through the mist, and Nance took it in a firm clasp.

"Listen!" she said, and there came to them the sound of martial music, and the tramp and march of armies. Nance looked into the gourd for a longer space than she had looked for Mr. Fauce, and when she spoke her voice sounded hushed and awed, as none there had ever heard it. "I look into the far future," she said, "and I see a white-haired woman, leaning on the arm of a man whom all worship and revere. He bears a star-spangled banner, and a kneeling people are giving him thanks for a priceless gift—the gift of a nation's liberty. As his mother they honour you, and count you blessed among women. I can see no more," said Nance, "I am blinded by what I see." Through the mists it almost seemed as though the old woman had knelt to join in the homage which had swept a people in passionate gratitude to its knees.

"I thank you," said Molly Ball, as controlled and serene as ever. But, as she moved back again to her place, the others watched her in hushed silence, so queenly was her step.

"Oh, Joyce, may I go next?" cried little Evelyn, eagerly. "Maybe Nance will see nice things for me, too. But in case she sees panthers, will you please to hold my hand?"

"Nay, all who seek the fates must seek them alone," declared the old woman. "But I should not come, little one, an I were you.

For what I see, that must I reveal, and it would go to my heart to sadden you."

Evelyn stood hesitating and a little frightened. "I should *like* to hear," she said at last. "But if I may not hold your hand, Joyce, will you stand where I can see you?"

"That will I, my little sweeting," answered Joyce, and moved with her into the mist, until Nance stayed her, and the child went on alone.

Evelyn's little hand lay like a pink rose leaf in Nance's withered palm. "Listen!" said the old woman, and there was a strange melancholy in her voice. From a long way off, there floated out to them the sound of the waves, soft and inexpressibly sad. "That is the going out of the tide, when people die," said Nance, "'tis the lament of the little waves, for those who die young." She looked into the gourd and there were tears in her sightless eyes as she murmured, "I see a beautiful maiden and a splendid youth, in a far-off land. Her drooping head is on his breast, until they are torn asunder by a stern father's wrath. Ah me! I see a broken heart and the fairest maid in all Virginia lying in her winding sheet. And through the old halls of Westover, evermore shall flit a gentle ghost——"

"Be silent, Nance!" Joyce's voice, imperious and clear, stopped further utterance. She ran boldly into the mist and caught the weeping child to her heart. "Come away, dear one," she cried, "and prithee do

not weep. 'Tis only a foolish play. Nance meant nothing in what she said."

"Nay, I warned the poor little one," said Nance. "What I see I must reveal, whether it be for good or ill. Who will come next?"

"I will," said Bob Carter, jumping up and stretching out a sturdy brown paw. And almost at once the air was alive with the eager barking of coon dogs, the screech of the coon, and the excited shouts of the hunters.

"What do you hear?" asked the old woman, smiling at him, very kindly, through the mists.

"Why, sure, 'tis Bruce and Sancho. And they've treed a coon. Here, Bruce! Hold him, Cæsar! Hold him!" cried the boy, completely carried away by the sounds.

Nance looked into the gourd, then shook her head. "The coon hunt is all I see," she said.

"Why, how's that, Nance?" demanded Bob indignantly.

"I know not," answered the old woman, "unless it be that such things are to make up the sum of your life."

"Well, I don't know that I desire aught better," declared Bob, slightly disappointed, nevertheless. "And I've always engaged to take you to a coon hunt, haven't I, Joyce?"

The old woman looked at him in sudden pity, but said no word.

Young Mr. Beverley came forward. "Is there aught good for me, mother, in the lap of the fates?" he asked.

"Listen!" said Nance, as she took his hand, and they heard the murmur of forest leaves, and the steady sound of the woodman's axe.

"There is *work* for you, my son," answered the old woman, very gravely. She looked into the gourd and added, "homely work in tilling and clearing the land, that will keep the pain from corroding your heart like the rust corrodes the iron.

"What pain, mother?" Mr. Beverley asked her.

"The pain of those who go through life lonely," answered Nance, as though the words were being forced out of her.

"You are none too cheerful, mother," said the young man, returning to his seat with footsteps that dragged.

"I'll be bound you've matters of more consequence for me, Goody," cried brother Joseph, bustling forward. He held out his big hand with its flat, square fingers. Old Nance took it almost maliciously. Quite clearly, and close at hand there came the braying of an ass!

"'Tis certain that cannot be meant for me!" cried brother Joseph, growing extremely red. But Nance had been looking into the gourd and her expression had changed.

"Truly Providence makes use of strange instruments," she said as if to herself. Then as though finding it hard to credit what she saw she went on,

"I see in your path a gallant boy, to whom

the sea is calling. But since it is necessary for the welfare of a nation that he remains on land you are chosen to scribe the letter that shall thwart his wishes. And hereafter, the world shall know you as 'Brother Joseph who scribed the foolish letter that kept George——'" Nance drew her hand sharply across her forehead as though she were coming out of a trance. "I am seeing too much," she said. "The fates have shut the door."

"I am more than ever confirmed in my opinion that you have a maggot in your brain, woman," said Brother Joseph, strutting back pompously to his seat.

Mr. Jacques Fontaine took his place. "And how much better is the world going to be for me, dame?" he asked lightly.

"Listen!" said Nance, and quite distinctly they heard the scratching sound of a pen on parchment.

"Not another foolish letter, I trust?" pleaded the young man, in mock consternation.

"No. But for other writing will men keep your memory green," Nance told him, looking into the gourd.

"Nay, you are mistook this time, dame," laughed Mr. Fontaine. "For to tell you candidly, the sword ever comes readier to my hand than the quill. And beyond letters to my family, and the stray notes I jot down in my journal for my pleasure, I scribe naught."

With as poor an opinion as had brother

Joseph of Nance's powers, Mr. Fontaine resumed his seat. Susie Carter, who had been screwing up her courage, came forward with a little run, her pace being accelerated by a slight push from Bob's hand.

"What a coward you are, Susie!" he observed with fraternal candour.

"I'm not a coward!" protested Susie. "But if Nance sees anything prodigious horrid for me, I shall swoon away!"

"Listen!" said Nance, and as clearly as though they had been beside it, they could hear the sound of a noisy brook, running over pebbles.

"Why, it's just a silly little brook!" cried Susie, deeply chagrined.

"Just a shallow little brook, rippling along in the sunshine," agreed Nance. "Still," she added, looking into the gourd, "I see you a young, young wife with a husband at your side, and fair children about your knee."

"How tedious!" observed Miss Carter. "I do think at least, Nance, you'd have seen some beaux for me!"

Tudor, who as host had waited until his guests had had their turn, came forward now, his handsome face full of its usual arrogant confidence. "You have not been over complimentary so far, Nance," he said. "Perhaps you will have something of more importance for me."

"Listen!" said Nance. And through the air there shrilled the scream of a peacock.

"Oh, Nance, that's too bad!" cried

Tudor, flushing, while Susie Carter giggled whole-heartedly.

Nance took his hand and looked into the gourd. "I see you as a crooked sapling that will straighten with the years," she said. "And in the near future I see you humbled to the dust, and abasing yourself in gratitude and contrition before one whom you have baited and cruelly used."

"A likely story!" scoffed Tudor, flouncing back to his seat.

"Had you eaten an unripe persimmon you could scarce have a wryer face!" observed the amiable Miss Carter.

"Evelyn, little love, will you loose your arms from my neck and let me take my turn," pleaded Joyce. "See, Aunt Hebe will take you on her knee until I come back."

"Deedy, I will," said the kind black woman. She picked up the child, who was still trembling like an aspen-leaf, and cuddling her on her lap, told her that there was still plenty of ice-cream in the freezer, and that when the fortune-telling was over she should help her to scoop it out.

"I am the last of all, Nance. And, an you are not too fatigued, I should dearly like to know my fortune," said Joyce.

"Your face would be your fortune, child, had you naught else," answered Nance, "and where you go, hearts follow, like sunflowers the sun. Give me your hand, and listen well."

Everyone looked at the little girl as she

stood up before them, her grey eyes dark with excitement, her hand fearlessly outstretched.

The sound of the river as it swept between its banks to the sea was in their ears. From overhead there came a sound they were all used to.

"Why, 'tis the cohoonk of the wild geese," cried Joyce wonderingly.

Nance's face saddened. "Ay, 'tis thus they cry when they go northward," she said. "Virginia will not hold our little maid for long."

The old woman looked long into the gourd—then her eyes glowed with the fires of her own dead and gone romance and the withered face grew young and almost beautiful again. "You gave a cup of cold water to a beggar, child," she said. "You have gained a royal heart in exchange. Danger and horror unspeakable lie about your path. Yet have no fear. Your champion will not suffer a hair of your head to be harmed. Swift as an eagle, tireless as an elk, strong as a brave man, and tender as a lover, is this champion of thine, little one. Once he took a gift from your hand. For this he will risk his life for you."

"But he will not die—say he will not die, Nance," cried Joyce, her voice sharp with pain. "I could not bear that anyone should die for me."

"I should like it above all things!" announced Miss Carter.

Nance looked into the gourd and shook her head. "Nay, that I cannot tell you," she said gently.

"Are any of us here present to be that champion?" asked Mr. Beverley hoarsely.

"Let all of you who wish to know draw nearer to the gourd, so that I may see the reflection of your faces in the water," said the old woman, her own voice tense with excitement.

A little crowd of gentlemen got up very quickly. Mr. Fauce was almost haggard, Mr. Beverley very white. Mr. Jacques Fontaine moved forward with the rest, looking as though he had received a shock. It had only just dawned on him what little Joyce Rolleston had come to mean to him.

"'Tis all folly about the lover, Joyce. Still, 'tis not my design to let anyone else champion you while I am here," said Bob Carter, moving sturdily forward with the rest.

"Though I go with the others, madam, you will please to take notice that it commits me to nothing," observed brother Joseph.

"Why, what could it commit you to, sir?" cried Joyce staring, while the knuckles on a hand holding a silver candlestick tightened ominously.

"Let him who holds the candles so steadily bring them nearer that I may see," said Nance in a strange voice.

The tall young footman did as he was bid, the flicker of the candles and his own face being reflected in the gourd along with those of the gentlemen.

Nance looked into the gourd and shuddered

as she looked. "Yes," she said at length, slowly and solemnly. "One of you will be the little maid's champion, and will risk his life for her."

"Will he die?" It was brother Joseph's voice, tremulous with personal anxiety.

Young Mr. Beverley pushed him aside impatiently. "Which of us?" he asked, his voice so strained that they hardly knew it.

But Nance threw another of the little balls no bigger than a melon seed into the flames and the mist thickened about her. When it cleared she was no longer there.

Aunt Hebe distributed her ice-cream to a strangely quiet company that evening.

CHAPTER XIV

"YOUNG FIRE"

It was June. In Madam's garden hollyhocks drooped over the fence, and the air was heavy with the scent of roses. Cherries hung from the boughs in the drive, and one could not walk through the old fields without one's feet being reddened with the juices of the wild strawberry. Humming-birds poised over the scarlet of the trumpet honeysuckle, and the mocking-bird poured out its sense of the ripe sweetness of the world, in a liquid song.

In the cornfields the blackbirds were making a persistent attack upon the grains. In the tobacco-fields, the month was celebrated by the appearance of that most loathsome object on earth—the tobacco worm.

As large as a man's finger, and of a sickly green in colour, the repulsive creatures had settled on the plants. Every day, and all day, they had to be carefully sought for, picked off and destroyed. No wonder that Anthony, relegated again to field work, bending to the abhorred task in the hot sunshine, grew sterner and more bitter. The work was fatiguing as well as nauseating, although morning and evening a flock of turkeys was

turned into the field to assist him and the other hands in the work of destruction. Their mutual exertions afforded the Brown Baby unlimited amusement, in which he was evidently under the impression that Anthony shared. And this obliging grown-up person who spent whole days in picking off tobacco worms for the Brown Baby's diversion and who rarely spoke now and never laughed, had still an occasional smile to bestow on his queer little friend.

One of the favourite pastimes of the Virginians in those days was to catch the horses that ran wild in the woods. According to the custom of the time, these belonged to whoever could seize them. And one June evening when Anthony made his way to Mr. Gookin's store, he found that gentleman and his cronies behind the safe shelter of a high gate, regarding a snorting, beautiful brute, pure white in colour, which had just got loose from the stable and was roaming the stable-yard in its efforts to find an avenue of escape. It had not been caught by Mr. Gookin himself but by a friend, and tempted by its showy appearance Mr. Gookin had offered to buy it from him. The offer had been accepted with an alacrity which in the light of present events Mr. Gookin had no difficulty in understanding. And now that one of his negroes had been maimed, and the wrist of another smashed, and the face of a white helper been as bruised as a coon's by a kick from the infuriated animal's hind legs, while at the

same time there seemed no prospect of getting the maddened creature back to his stable without risking further casualties of a like nature, the worthy storekeeper was regretting his bargain in bitterness of spirit.

Anthony had been bred up among horses all his life, and knew their points as well as an Indian knows the woods. He took in the handsome head with its flowing mane, the prominent withers, and long shoulders, and gave an involuntary whistle of admiration. "Why, he's worth a king's ransom, Mr. Gookin!" he exclaimed.

"He's worth powder and shot!" retorted Mr. Gookin. "An' that's jest what he's going to git. Until I've put daylight through that hoss, I shan't feel I've a negro or a stick or stone in the place that's safe from him."

He went into the store and returned with a rifle, but it was only when he actually threw it to his shoulder that the others realised that he had not spoken in jest.

"Hold your fire, man!" cried Anthony sharply. "If you'll undertake to spare his life, I'll undertake to break him in."

"Done with you!" said the storekeeper. "Offers like that are as scarce as hen's teeth, and I'm not the man to spoil sport. The brute's sartain to break your neck. But an he doesn't, I'll make you a present of him."

A glow came into the boy's face. "It's mighty generous in you, Mr. Gookin," he said.

"Well, that's a p'int that remains to be

seen," returned Mr. Gookin ominously. "You kin choose your own whip out of the store."

"I shall use no whip," said Anthony.

Mr. Gookin looked dumfounded. "What about a saddle, then?" he asked.

"I shall ride him bareback," Anthony told him. "All I want is a bridle and snaffle—the strongest you've got. Will you be pleased to let one of your servants fling them up to me when I am mounted?"

"You are an eye-opener!" said Mr. Gookin. He glanced down the straight sandy road and added. "I've no wish to hasten your end, yunk but as I see Mr. Slaughter comin' this way, and as he's safe to put a stop to your devilments, an' he gets here in time, if you're going to begin you'd better start. I'll go an' git you that bridle and snaffle myself, to make sure."

Within the stable, until he had kicked and flung them off, and beaten down the door with his hoofs, the white horse had been treated with senseless cruelty. Half a dozen negroes had hung on to him by the ears; they had beaten him over his sensitive nostrils with the crop of a whip; they had pressed him up against the sides of the stable when he tried to get free. He had shaken them off as though they had been so many chestnut burrs, but the treatment had roused all that was savagest in his nature. He lay back his ears and snapped with his mouth; he kicked out with his hind legs; he made vicious rushes at his tormentors, who every now and

then, armed with whips and stones, were trying to get him back again into the stable. He had gone round and round the stable-yard in a vain effort to find an opening through which he could bound, or a fence that he could jump. Now he stood still, stamping and pawing the ground.

"Stand clear!" cried Anthony to the negroes, an order that they were nothing loth to obey.

The spectators held their breath as they saw the boy walk quietly up to the snorting animal, his hands in his pockets.

"Whoa, then!" he said, and at the quiet soothing sound of his voice the white horse ceased the fierce movement of his forefeet, and stood still in sheer amazement.

"Dat horse gwine trample young massa to dead, right now!" cried the negroes.

"If it does, you'll have me to reckon with, Gookin," said Mr. Slaughter, so grimly that the storekeeper looked down at him apprehensively.

And then a still more astonishing thing happened. The onlookers saw Anthony take his hand with apparent carelessness out of his pocket, saw it go in the direction of the horse's head, saw him working it in a friendly way up and down the long light neck. The white horse stood still and undecided, breathing out foam and fire, yet seeming to feel some indefinable attraction in the tranquillizing movement.

But when it came to letting Anthony mount

him it was a different matter. He made an infuriated rush at the boy at his first attempt.

"Gracious mercy! But I'm glad the brute didn't get him!" exclaimed Mr. Gookin, wiping the sweat from his brow with a bandanna handkerchief.

"You've reason to be!" returned Mr. Slaughter significantly.

Twice the fiery beast thundered down on Anthony. Twice the boy swerved aside. The third time he caught the flowing mane, and with a dexterous leap settled himself on the strong white back. Sitting without a saddle, and seeming scarcely even to grip by the knees at this stage, he maintained his seat by the perfect poise and balance of his splendid, limber young body.

"That boy and that hoss fit each other like they was a hook and eye!" observed Mr. Gookin, trying to be ingratiating.

"Or as a stout, hearty man—like you, Mr. Gookin—would fit a pine-wood coffin!" returned the overseer, and again Mr. Gookin found himself wishing, for his own sake, that the English boy would win through.

For a moment after Anthony was seated the horse remained as motionless as a fish-hawk when it rests upon the wing before making a dart. The next instant the grip of Anthony's knee, and the sudden bracing of his toe against a white foreleg, answered the vigorous bound with which the horse tried to unseat him.

During the next five minutes the stable-yard

was a pandemonium. The foaming animal kicked and reared and stamped. He almost touched the earth with his head in his efforts to shake his rider off; he pawed the air until it seemed a miracle that the boy could maintain his seat. But through it all Anthony clung to him like a barnacle.

"The bridle and snaffle!" he called to the negroes.

They were thrown up to him, and he caught them neatly, holding on to the horse's mane with one hand.

"Now fling the gate wide!" he ordered, and the negroes did so, scattering out of his way like so many frightened sheep.

Anthony dug his heels into the white horse's flank, and the next moment horse and rider had swept through the opening like a hurricane.

"If he comes back at all, it'll be as a corpse," said one of the onlookers.

"I'm not so sure about that," observed Mr. Slaughter. "I've seen some fine riding among the quality here, but this lad beats all!"

Along the soft sandy road and into the pine woods tore the furious steed. At first he seemed merely bent on tiring his rider out. But this rider was tireless.

It was almost without warning that he made his final effort. He pawed the air again, he stood upright, he toppled clean over on his back, hoping to crush his rider beneath his weight. But Anthony had slipped to the ground before he could touch the earth, had got the snaffle between his teeth, and had

sprung upon his back again while he was in the act of regaining his feet.

The white horse had a hard mouth. But the snaffle was a cruel one, and the firm hands holding it could do other things than snap at the Brown Baby, or stroke a horse's neck. Such schooling was never to come the white horse's way again. But while it lasted it was severe.

He was made to go at full speed, or to check his pace as his master willed it; he was made to take a track as winding as a fox's trail when all his inclination was for a straight road; he was made to wheel and halt, to bound over fallen trees, to leap whatever he was put at. And at every attempt to go his own way, or to take the bit between his teeth, he was met by a sharp reminder that he must now sink his own will into that of another.

But the white horse did not receive his schooling by means of the cruel snaffle alone. He was taught too, by a friendly voice, that rewarded every effort he made to yield by an affectionate pat on the neck, by an instant slacking of the bridle, by words of praise and encouragement. Never once did Anthony lose his temper, never once did the firm voice fail to give its just meed of praise or blame. Since the white horse must have a master it was well for him that in Anthony he had gained one whom he could trust. It was with a free snaffle that the boy rode him back again to Mr. Gookin's store.

Among the spectators there who had watched him set out not one had left. The negroes huzzahed and flung up their hats as they saw him. The white people, too, made quite a kindly demonstration of wonder and admiration.

"Well, the hoss is yourn, yunk," said Mr. Gookin. "A bargain's a bargain. But you'd better get him out of my range quick, if you don't want me to go back on my word. Why, you've got him as mild as a sucking dove. Unless I'd seen it with my own eyes, I'd never 'a' believed it.

Anthony had dismounted and was standing quite close to the horse, which was nuzzling into his hand. Mr. Gookin put out his own hand to give the animal a half admonitory pat on the head. In an instant, the white horse's jaws were snapping, like a coon's when the dogs are on him. If Mr. Gookin managed to get back his hand in time it was as much as he did. The white horse only intended to have one master, it seemed.

"Ugh, you brute!" exclaimed Mr. Gookin. "Take him away at once, yunk, and good riddance to him! Where shall you keep him?"

A twist of pain came into Anthony's face. He glanced at the silent Mr. Slaughter, but said nothing.

"I suppose you couldn't lower yourself to ask a favour of your enemies, lad?" said the overseer, looking into space.

"No, I couldn't," answered Anthony.

"But I could from my friends. May I keep the horse, Mr. Slaughter?"

"Ay, lad," answered Mr. Slaughter. "There's no lack of stables at Pine Mount. As for paying for his keep, if Madam has the mind to have her errands done in the drawing of a trigger, we shall have an animal on the premises who'll be able to oblige her."

"You'll have to let the yunk ride him then," observed Mr. Gookin, surveying the hand which had just missed the snap of the white horse's jaws as a miser might survey his recovered treasures.

"How shall you name him, lad?" asked Mr. Slaughter.

Anthony thought for a minute. Then he smiled into the fires of the horse's eyes. "Young Fire!" he said.

It was in this month that Mr. Fauce asked Joyce to marry him.

Dearly as Joyce loved her rides on Archduke, her tiffs with Mr. Fauce had been of too frequent occurrence lately to make that gentleman's society altogether agreeable to her. But when she ventured to hint as much to Madam, the latter chid her sharply, and forbade her on any account to discontinue them. But the rides were now destined to come to an abrupt end.

They were riding through a lovely valley by the side of a lake which was white with water-lilies, when Mr. Fauce spoke.

"Madam, will you marry me?" he asked.

His voice was fond, but it was the voice of one who has but to ask to have.

"Goodness gracious, no, sir!" answered Joyce, horror-stricken.

"And why not, madam?" asked Mr. Fauce with a darkening face.

"Because I do not desire to marry anyone, sir!" Joyce told him, not yet recovered from her disquietude.

"But your mother expects it of you, madam," expostulated Mr. Fauce.

Joyce looked at him in childish consternation. "But does she expect me to marry you, sir?" she inquired anxiously.

"Indeed she does, madam," Mr. Fauce told her.

"How vastly provoking!" cried the little girl ruefully. "I cannot abide to be undutiful to my mamma."

"Then do not be undutiful, madam. Marry me!" urged Mr. Fauce.

"Oh, I couldn't, I assure you, sir!" cried Joyce in a hurry. "I pray you put such thoughts out of your mind."

"But why not, madam?" Mr. Fauce persisted.

"Sir, I am most heartily sorry to wound you," answered Joyce. "But if you must know, 'tis because I do not like you well enough."

A dark flush rose to Mr. Fauce's face. "That is unfortunate, madam!" he said.

"It is indeed, sir," agreed the little girl, profoundly sorry for them both.

"It is more unfortunate still, madam, that you did not discover the fact before you encouraged me to pay my addresses to you," said Mr. Fauce.

"Encouraged you to pay your addresses to me! Oh, I never did!" cried Joyce indignantly.

Mr. Fauce laid his hand lightly and significantly on Archduke's neck. "No, madam?" he asked suavely.

"Do you mean that you required a return for letting me ride Archduke?" cried Joyce contemptuously. "If so, you give with a niggard's hand, sir!"

The two rode on in offended silence, which Mr. Fauce broke.

"All the gentry on the Rappahannock have given me to you, madam," he observed with a touch of feline cruelty, "and what do you suppose your mother will say when I wait upon her to tell her that you have jilted me?"

Joyce looked at him in genuine surprise. "Why, you're never going to tell on me, are you?" she asked, like a little schoolgirl. "How base!"

"You permit yourself a certain frankness of speech, madam!" replied Mr. Fauce bitterly. "Permit me to remind you that I am not your young friend, Bob Carter."

"I wish you *were* Bob!" Joyce sighed. "Bob would cut off his right hand before he would tell on me." Then she softened at the sight of the real suffering in Mr. Fauce's

face. "Forgive my rudeness, sir," she cried, her voice very winning. "Indeed I thank you for the infinite honour you have paid me. And indeed, and indeed, sir, I would marry you an I could."

"Perhaps you have met someone you favour more, madam," suggested Mr. Fauce, with the faint, subtle insult in his voice that had been there once before. And, as before, it acted on Joyce like flint on steel.

"I have met *many* people I favour more than you, sir!" she declared. "And now, if you please, we will ride home."

"As you will, madam," said Mr. Fauce, wheeling his horse. "But give me leave to remark that there are other ways of winning a bride than by beseechings!"

"I am not one to be won by force, sir!" Joyce told him proudly. "And I no longer ask you to keep silence. I will tell my mamma myself."

They rode to Pine Mount in deadly silence. But before they dismounted Mr. Fauce spoke again. "Think again, madam," he said, "I am better as a lover than as an enemy!"

"Since you can say that, sir, I would rather have you for an enemy a thousand times!" declared Miss Rolleston.

"So be it, madam!" answered Mr. Fauce, bowing low.

In her riding habit, as she was, Joyce went straight to Madam. The interview that followed was the most painful of her life.

Disappointed in her ambitious plans, and thwarted in her imperious will, Madam Rolleston's wrath was terrible. Joyce went from her presence weeping.

Mr. Fauce may or may not have said truly that it was better to have him for a lover than an enemy. But in the latter capacity he knew where to wound, and tragic happenings were to follow Joyce's refusal of him.

CHAPTER XV

THE PRINCESS POCOHONTAS

Life at Pine Mount became vastly changed for Joyce in the days that followed. There were no more rides on Archduke, and Mr. Fauce kept persistently away. Little Evelyn had departed to her English boarding-school. Tudor and young Mr. Beverley had returned to the William and Mary College, to which Judge Carter had now sent Bob. Bob's departure had decided the mothers of the maids who had shared his studies that the time had now come for them to put away their books and take up such duties as belonged to women. In consequence, the Rev. Mr. Swann no longer taught Miss Rolleston the Latin grammar, the damsel instead being obliged to follow her mamma to the kitchen, there to help her weigh and measure out the food for the house and quarters, Sukey standing beside them with the key-basket. But though Madam trained her young daughter in all housewifely ways with the utmost thoroughness, she never spoke to her unless she was obliged. Formerly there had been no lack of cavaliers to attend Miss Rolleston when she elected to ride abroad. But now that Tudor and young Mr. Beverley

and Bob and even Ephra'm were away at Williamsburg, her horse, Black Arrow, pined lonely in his stable. Madam would neither suffer her to ride alone nor appoint her a groom. It was all part of her punishment.

Madam was keeping her room with a slight attack of marsh fever, when an urgent message came to her from Germanna, the German settlement on the river, asking her to visit the wife of the minister there, who was sick of an ague. Pine Mount was the nearest plantation to the lonely, poverty-stricken little settlement, and Madam always took her duties to her neighbour very seriously. Moreover, she had in her medicine-chest the remedy that was needed, and as Joyce was as well able to administer it as herself and to give directions for the patient's treatment, she determined to send her in her place early on the following morning. But before doing so, she sent for Mr. Slaughter.

"Frau Schrader, at Germanna, is sick of a flux, Mr. Slaughter," she told him. "Is the road safe enough after the rains for my daughter to ride out there to-morrow with medicines and aids?"

Mr. Slaughter considered. "'Tis true the creeks have been out," he said at last. "But they have as good as subsided, as I heard from the express ere now. Little miss would be safe enough an she had a trusty groom to attend her, and to see that she picked her way."

"Whom do you propose?" asked Madam.

"If we wasn't so pushed here, and if I didn't know as how they'd all slack off the minute I turned my back, I'd take little miss myself," said the overseer. "But if the new English hand can use a rifle as well as he can ride, she'd be safer with him than with anyone."

"Is he to be trusted, think you?" asked Madam anxiously.

Mr. Slaughter gave her an odd look. "Well, I think I might go so far as to say 'yes' to that," he answered.

Leaving Madam's presence Mr. Slaughter made his way to the store, where, as he expected, he found Anthony, quill in hand, straightening up Mr. Gookin's accounts. The storekeeper was sitting smoking beside him, regarding his achievements in awed admiration.

"And to think that the yunk can ride as well as though he hadn't any book-larnin' in him!" he observed wonderingly.

The overseer touched Anthony on the shoulder. "Can you shoot, lad?" he asked.

"They say so, in England," answered Anthony carelessly. "Mr. Gookin, when you have to subtract one sum from another, it isn't advisable to add them together first!"

"What did you shoot in England, lad?" asked Mr. Slaughter.

"Pheasants, mostly," answered Anthony incautiously.

"I'll lay my life they didn't jail you for a

poacher, all the same!" observed the overseer in his dry way.

"I fear I cannot take the wager, Mr. Slaughter," returned Anthony very gravely, "since, you see, I have an advantage over you in knowing whether they did or not!"

The overseer looked at him for a minute in silence. "Put down that quill, lad," he said, "and come out into the yard with me. The ciphering can wait for a bit. Let me have a rifle and a lighted candle, will you, Mr. Gookin?"

Mr. Gookin supplied both requirements, and came out into the yard with them. Dropping a little of the heated wax on the top of the fence rail the overseer fixed the candle so that it stood upright in it. Then he put the rifle into Anthony's hands. "From how many paces can you extinguish the flame of that candle?" he asked.

Anthony looked at it thoughtfully. "Fifty," he said at length.

If Mr. Slaughter felt surprised he didn't show it. "Load up then, lad," he said, "and prove that you haven't been ringing your own bell."

Mr. Gookin passed over powder and shot, and the two men watched with interest while the boy carefully patched the bullet and rammed it down into the powder charge.

In the act of lifting the long heavy rifle to his shoulder, Anthony turned to Mr. Slaughter. "Am I to extinguish the candle altogether or merely to snuff it?" he enquired.

"You are to stop sassing, and to get to work!" returned the overseer grimly.

"Then since you put the onus of the choice on me, Mr. Slaughter, with your permission I will snuff it," said the boy, sighting along the barrel.

The bullet whistled through the air, and buried itself in a distant tree-trunk. The candle flickered for a moment and then burned with a steadier flame. The wick had been neatly cut.

"I'll be blamed if a backwoodsman could ha' shot straighter!" cried Mr. Gookin, giving the highest praise he knew. He leant over to Mr. Slaughter and said in a whisper, "I reckon I should think twice before putting my rifle into the hands of a yunk who can shoot like that. One fine day you'll find he'll quit with it."

"Some folks are as quick to smell evil as a buzzard is carrion," returned Mr. Slaughter shortly. He said no word as to what he thought of the performance himself, and merely bidding Anthony call at his house on his way home when the ciphering was finished, took his departure.

Later on, when Aunt Molly ushered Anthony into the overseer's living-room, where he was sitting smoking, he reached down his own rifle from the wall.

"Madam is sending little miss to Germanna to-morrow morning," he said. "She needs a groom to escort her there. She has singled you out for the office."

"Madam does me too much honour!" answered the bitter young voice. "But can I positively be spared from my task of picking off the tobacco worm, Mr. Slaughter?"

"If we try uncommon hard we may perhaps make shift to get along without you, lad!" Mr. Slaughter told him. "But that's neither here nor there. All you've got to do is to obey Madam's commands. And those are to take little miss to Germanna and bring her back again in safety. The trail is a beaten one, and lies along the river's side. You couldn't miss it an you tried. You can go on your own horse, but the creeks have been out, so have a care how you ride. Horses have been mired in the mud there, time and again. As for wild beasts, you won't light on anything that won't fly from you, but I'm going to loan you my rifle to be on the safe side. Here it is. And here's a powder-horn and shot-pouch."

Anthony stowed the two latter articles about his person, and then looked into the stock of the rifle to see if the little leather patching squares were in their place.

"Some lads with a horse under their legs and a rifle in their hands, might take the opportunity to 'scape off into the woods," said Mr. Slaughter, to his pipe.

"Not when it meant having to turn their backs on such a paradise as Pine Mount, surely, Mr. Slaughter?" protested his companion.

Mr. Slaughter still smoked placidly.

"Other lads," he said again, "would be true to their trust and not go making off with another man's rifle in their hands."

"Can you favour me with a piece of flax or tow, Mr. Slaughter?" asked Anthony.

Mr. Slaughter reached over to a drawer, and pulled out a handful of tow. Anthony took it from him and sitting on the edge of the table, wound a piece of tow round the rifle worm and passed it up and down the barrel to clean it.

"An excellent rifle, Mr. Slaughter," he said, getting to his feet, when the operation was finished. "One after my own heart too, I assure you!"

"You must saddle little miss's horse and be at the Great House with it, at dawn," said the overseer. "You've a long ride in front of you."

"I shall be there, Mr. Slaughter—if I haven't flown the coop in the meantime," Anthony told him, shouldering the rifle affectionately.

Some people might have thought that Miss Joyce Rolleston, in her flowing habit and feather, made a pretty picture as she came into the porch, surrounded by her dogs, the next morning. But Joyce's face was sad. She had been to Madam's room to say good-bye, and Madam's manner had been cold to excess.

"Good-morning, sir," said Joyce, to the waiting groom holding her stirrups.

"Good-morning, madam," said the groom

with deference. He took from her the valise containing the medicine and the wicker basket containing the picnic lunch Aunt Hebe had prepared, and strapped them to his saddle bow. Then fastening Young Fire to a tree, he returned to mount his little mistress. Joyce put her foot in his hand and her hand on his shoulder, and came to the saddle like a bird. The two rode down the drive, and out at the great iron gates, the groom keeping his proper regulation pace behind.

Madam's manner had wounded Joyce sorely. But what young heart could keep wholly sad in the wonder and freshness of this summer morning in Virginia. Red-birds sang, and grasshoppers chirped, and honey bees droned in the sunshine. Butterflies, black and red admirals, and exquisite mother-of-pearls, flecked the air. Cows were lowing in the pastures, and the woodpecker was already hammering. The south wind was so soft that it scarce ruffled the ringlets under Joyce's plume. Trees were blazed on each side of the bridle-path, making it easy to follow, and every now and then, through a break in the foliage, they caught glimpses of the river.

Joyce set the pace and it was a swift one. She gave Black Arrow his head, and the little horse raced her over the ground, Young Fire following at a long swinging trot.

After a space Miss Rolleston turned her head.

"Do you find my company distasteful,

sir, that you ride so far behind ? " she enquired.

" Nay, madam, 'twas to show you that I knew my position as your groom," answered Anthony. But he smiled at her as he said it, and took an equal's place at her side, as one who has an unquestioned right to it. Young Fire took the opportunity to mark his sense of the adage that "two is company and three none" by a vicious snap in the direction of a green riding-habit, that the stern pull on his mouth that followed made him regret. After Anthony had taken him aside and reasoned with him, he regretted it still more.

When the white horse rode beside the black one again, though he blew clouds of smoke from his nostrils, he no longer snapped. But Miss Rolleston liked him none the less for his spirit. Horse-riding was her passion and she looked at the fiery steed with eyes of longing. "Will you promise to let me ride him, some day, sir?" she asked, like an eager child.

"No, madam," answered Anthony.

"No, sir?" asked Joyce, astonished.

"Young Fire hath too hard a mouth for a lady's handling, madam," Anthony told her.

"But Mr. Fauce has always suffered me to ride Archduke," Joyce protested.

"Young Fire is not Archduke, madam—nor am I Mr. Fauce," answered Anthony.

"'Tis plain you have a poor opinion of my horsemanship, sir," observed Miss Rolleston, much chagrined. "I should not wish to boast, but when I tell you I am accounted at

least as good a rider as Tudor, or Bob Carter, you will not, sure, deny me the favour I crave."

"I must, madam," said Anthony. "I do not hold Young Fire a safe mount for you."

"But I maintain he is, sir," cried Joyce warmly. A wicked flash of daring came into her eyes. "Change saddles with me, sir," she challenged, "and let me prove it to you." Then as her companion still looked unyielding, she laid an eager hand on his saddle. "I should so dearly like to show you how I can ride, sir," she added winningly.

"I may not, madam," answered Anthony. "I, too, should dearly like to pleasure you. But your safety comes first with me."

"Then give me leave to observe, sir, that you are most disobliging," said Miss Rolleston with temper. "And since you are so ill-natured, I will ride alone."

"As you will, madam," said Anthony, and instantly dropped behind.

Soon they came to a point where the path became more difficult. Though the creeks had receded, they had left the ground very damp and spongy. Pools of water, whose depth it was difficult to gauge, stood in their way, and had to be skirted or leaped. Prudence was never Miss Rolleston's strong point, and in her anger she took them recklessly.

"Have a care, madam!" called a warning voice from behind.

For answer, Miss Rolleston skimmed

through a patch of what looked like green moss, but which took her horse up to his knees in slime.

The next instant she found Anthony beside her.

"I said I would ride alone, sir," she reminded him, with hauteur.

"So you shall, madam, as soon as the going becomes easier," Anthony promised her.

Miss Rolleston leant along her horse's neck, and whispered a word in his ear that sent him speeding forward like an arrow from a bow. He leapt the first pool he came to, he splashed through a second, but to his rider's exasperation he stuck in the third, his feet and legs sinking deeper every second into the quagmire.

"After!" cried Anthony, and the white horse snorted in his contempt for the black one. He took the first pool in a flying bound, and without pausing was over the second like a bird on the wing, dashing through the third like a whirlwind. "Steady!" cried Anthony, with a hand on Joyce's bridle, and the impetuosity of the onset dragged the black horse's feet out of the oozy fastness, and landed him with a rush high and dry on the path once again.

But though the danger was passed, Anthony still kept his hand on Joyce's bridle.

"Why do you hold my bridle, sir?" demanded the little girl, after a minute.

"To ensure against your playing such antics again, madam," she was told.

"Had ever maid so masterful a groom?" said Joyce almost sadly.

"Had ever groom so wilful a mistress?" returned the individual who was now controlling her pace. But when the bridle-path became safe again he loosed his hold and dropped behind.

Miss Rolleston rode alone as she had desired. But after a space she reined up her horse in order to allow her attendant to come up with her. But as the latter instantly reined up too, and at the respectful distance he had set between them, her object was not attained.

Suddenly the little girl wheeled her horse and rode back to him. "Will you be friends again, sir?" she asked very sweetly.

"I could never be aught else, madam," answered her groom.

"Even when I am out of humour, and impatient of restraint, like I was ere now?" questioned Joyce.

"Always, madam," was the grave answer.

"How vastly agreeable!" observed Miss Rolleston, riding along at her companion's side with the sunlight in her face.

So silently they rode for a time, that the ruffed grouse boomed off from under their very feet, and a party of squirrels scolding an owl who was sitting in the cavity of a hollow tree, had no warning of their approach until they were upon them. The owl's blinking white face made Joyce laugh, and she began to teach Anthony some of the forest lore she had learnt from old Nance.

She showed him where a bear had sharpened its claws on the bole of a poplar, and told him the herd of russet deer which flew past them had been feeding on the river mosses. She pointed out the spice-wood bush on whose buds the wise turkey-hen feeds the young turkeys in bad weather, to prevent them taking a chill, and bade him note well the plant of the star-grass, the strongest known antidote against the bite of the rattlesnake, which a kindly Providence always plants for man's benefit in the haunts of these reptiles. Little open-clock blooms lay in their path, and Joyce gaily told him that at twelve o'clock they would close, and that that should be the signal for their lunch.

"And now it is your turn, sir," she said. "Will you, if you please, tell me somewhat about home?"

Riding down the bridle-paths of old Virginia, and looking into a listening face more vivid and changing than any town beauty could show, Anthony told her of the land he had left, of the Palace and the Mall and the Opera, of the chocolate houses and the wits who frequented them, of Eton College, and of his Majesty King George the First, and the lords and ladies of his Court.

"And among all these people of condition, sir, did you ever get sight of our kinsman the Duke of Whitby, and his poor young son the Earl of Forres?" asked Joyce.

"Often, madam," answered Anthony.

"I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with our English kinsfolk, sir," said Joyce.

"Will it please you to describe them to me?"

Anthony thought for a space. Then he said, "The Duke of Whitby is almost royal in his power and magnificence, madam. Few princes have such great estates or splendid palaces as he. But since his only son was maimed on the hunting field, and lies for ever on his couch, the Duke has become almost a recluse. He is a rigid Papist, as you doubtless know, and has sent out great sums of money to the Pope that prayers may be said, day and night, in all lands, for the poor lad's recovery."

"And will he recover, sir?" asked the little girl.

Madam's English servant must have had a feeling heart, to judge by the sadness that came into his face. "That is in God's name, madam," he said. "The town physicians give no hope. He has had a heavy trial to bear of late, too, in the loss of his friend and kinsman," he added, his blue eyes sombre.

"I had not heard of it, sir," said Joyce.

"You would not have done so, madam, Anthony told her. "This kinsman was not rich or a person of consequence like the young Earl. He was just a plain country gentleman, living with his mother—the sweetest lady in the world, madam—at the dower house attached to the castle. But the young Earl and he were fondly attached. They shared all country sports. They went to Eton together. They were like brothers. The Duke had always been jealous of their friend-

ship. After the accident he grew to hate his young kinsman."

"Why, sir?" asked Joyce.

Her groom paused for a moment. Then he said, "Because, madam, should anything happen to the Earl—which God forbid—this other boy would be the Duke's heir."

"Of what person and disposition is this other boy, sir?" asked Joyce, deeply interested.

"He is a very ordinary fellow, madam," answered Anthony. "The only thing of note about him is some poor quality he has of remaining constant to his friends and his cause."

"And what may that cause be, sir," asked Joyce.

"He is a Jacobite, madam," Anthony told her.

"How interesting this is, sir!" cried Joyce. "Why, all my mamma's kinsmen are Jacobites at heart, even here in Virginia. I have heard it rumoured that when my grandpapa drank the King's health he ever passed his glass over the water carafe first to show that it was the king over the water whom he meant. But how did the young Earl come to lose his friend, sir?" she asked suddenly.

"They were—parted," Anthony told her, his voice so stern, that Joyce stared at him. "And now, madam," he added, changing the subject, "the blooms you bade me watch have closed. What say you to dismounting and letting me serve you with refreshments?"

"Nay, I will choose a spot for our picnic, and lay out our provisions, while you see to the horses," cried Joyce gaily.

"Do we dine together, then, madam?" asked her groom.

"How otherwise, sir?" said the little girl.

Anthony bowed gravely, and throwing Young Fire's bridle over his arm, helped her to dismount. He then hobbled both horses' legs, and turned them loose to graze on the luxurious grass.

"Will you be pleased to fill this flagon from the spring, sir?" called Joyce's joyous voice. "And will you undertake not to look until all is finished?"

Anthony gave a smiling promise, and waited until she called him again. "Have I not chosen me a sweet spot, sir?" cried Miss Rolleston in pretty pleasure as he advanced. "And is not our table prodigious elegant?"

It was indeed a sylvan retreat that Joyce had discovered, walled round with mossy boulders and fronting the river. Great purple flags grew round about it, wild maidenhair ferns sprayed to the water's edge, while Virginian creepers festooning above them made the place a very bower.

Joyce had chosen a brushwood pile for the table, and for tablecloth had spread it with the fine damask napkin that had been intended for her own exclusive use. She had plucked a handful of wood-pansies and wild pinks and laid them in the middle of the table, grouping round them the delicacies Aunt Hebe had

provided in the way of cold capon, cold ham, crisp salad, and golden-brown gingerbread. "Oh, sir," cried little Joyce, seeing the appreciation in her companion's face, "I do not know why it is I feel so happy."

There was much to occupy them in the doings of the inhabitants of the woods, after their repast was finished. Far overhead, they heard the fierce scream of the bald-headed eagle as he launched himself on a fish-hawk with a fish in its mouth, and made it disgorge its prey. An otter poked its nose above the stream: a snapping turtle squatted on a boulder: a kingfisher, with a shrill cry, made his circular plunge. Once—and Joyce held her breath then in pure childish rapture at the sight—a grey squirrel having propelled a piece of bark on to the river, gravely seated himself thereon, and using his tail as a sail, reached the other side in safety. A little blue-tailed lizard, darting along the ground, was so tame that it ran over her hand.

Sitting in the sunshine, resting against the smooth, purplish trunk of a black birch tree, Joyce began to tell the English boy stories of the first settlers, whose romantic lives had been lived in woods like these upon the James River. "Their doings are all set down in Mr. Beverley's history book," she said. "I find what he relates more interesting than the boxes of new plays my mamma has sent over from London. But of all the stories he narrates, the one I love most is about the Indian princess Pocohontas."

"Will you tell it to me, madam?" asked Anthony from the sward at her feet.

And while the woodpecker said "Chink! Chink!" and the locusts shrilled in the branches, and Anthony, for all his listening ear, kept a watchful eye on the horses to see that they did not stray too far, and a more watchful eye still on the ground against the approach of rattlesnakes, Joyce told again the deathless story of the Indian maid and Captain John Smith.

"When the settlers first landed," she told him, "the great Indian king, Powhatan, captured their brave leader, Captain John Smith. They brought him to Werowocomoco"—the word tripped off Joyce's lips in a way that proved her Virginian born—"where the king held his court. Powhatan was dressed in a great robe made of racoon skins, with all the tails hanging down. He was hard and cruel, but he spoke and looked like a king. When they saw Captain John Smith all the Indians gave a great shout and Powhatan ordered them to seize him. They laid his head upon two great stones and stood ready with their clubs to beat out his brains when Powhatan should give command. But before Powhatan could raise a hand, Pocohontas, the king's dearest daughter, ran forward and laid her head upon his, so that if they struck they would kill her first. Whereupon Powhatan was contented that he should live, and let him go back to his own people. Was she not a brave maid?" asked Joyce, with a kindling

face. "I think Captain John Smith must have loved her dearly for it, do not you, sir?"

"I think he easily might, madam," was the quiet answer.

"You speak doubtfully, sir," said Joyce.

"I meant not to, madam," said Anthony. "I was but thinking how differently he would have planned it, had he been free to choose."

"Would he not have chosen that she should protect him, sir?" asked Joyce, her eyes widening.

"No man would choose it so, madam," answered the boy. "There was once a King Cophetua who lifted a beggar maid to his throne. All lovers would have it that way, madam, an they could. But did fate will that they should be the ones to receive and not to give, they might find that that, too, is sweet."

"You speak as though you knew, sir," said Joyce.

"Do I, madam?" said Anthony. "Is it your pleasure that I fetch the horses? An we are to get back from Germanna before sundown, we should be starting now."

They reached Germanna, that odd little palisaded settlement, with its nine houses all in a row and its stout blockhouse that was used for a church on Sundays, in ample time. Joyce administered medicine and warm human sympathy that was perhaps equally efficacious to the sick, overworked minister's wife. On the return journey Anthony found his charge easier to deal with than she had

been in coming. He brought her back in safety to Pine Mount before sundown.

"Why, I declare, if that isn't Tudor in the porch!" cried Joyce, wonder and consternation in her voice. Anthony helped her to dismount and she ran up the steps quickly, a foreboding of evil in her heart.

Anthony stabled the two horses, and then made his way with the rifle to the overseer's house.

"Here's your rifle, Mr. Slaughter," he said. "Did your uneasiness concerning it permit you to get any sleep last night?"

"Never passed a better night in my life, lad," said the overseer calmly, taking the rifle from him, and hanging it up in its old place.

But meanwhile Joyce had gone to meet tragedy. Anthony was to see her again that evening.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LETTER

"Is anything amiss, Tudor?" asked Joyce anxiously, as soon as her foot touched the porch.

"Nay, what should be amiss, sister?" retorted Tudor, resentfully. "I take it very hard that a young fellow who has obtained the Commissary's leave to absent himself for a day from his studies cannot ride out to his own plantation to wait upon his mother and sister without there being all this pother about it." But he refrained from looking at Joyce as he said it, and it might almost have seemed from the way in which he raised his voice that the information was intended for the benefit of Uncle Pharaoh, who, as curious as Joyce on the subject, was hovering about the porch.

"Have you seen mamma?" asked Joyce, by no means reassured.

"Yes," answered Tudor, kicking sulkily at the edge of the porch, "and I've been put to it, I can tell you, to convince her that I've come for nothing worse than a desire for her company."

Joyce looked at him with a lengthening face. She had known from her babyhood

upwards that when Tudor made any professions of attachment, it was generally because he wanted something.

"Let's into your chamber, sister, where we can be retired," suggested Tudor, abruptly.

It was an ominous request, and Joyce understood it as such. "I must first present myself before mamma," she told him, "to report my safe arrival, and to convey to her Frau Schrader's acknowledgments. When she dismisses me, we will go to my chamber, as you desire."

Madam received Joyce with the coldness which had now become habitual to her. She made no enquiries about the ride, and after having received a careful account of the state of Frau Schrader's health, she conveyed to her young daughter that she was at liberty to depart. Sad at heart, Joyce returned to Tudor, bracing herself to meet the unknown.

As she saw the brother and sister mount the stairs, a woman with a desperate face—the face Mammy Chloe wore on the nights when the thought of Ephra'm made her practise voodoo worship in the cave—slipped into Joyce's chamber and hid behind the curtains of her bed. So motionless and still was she, that neither Tudor nor her little mistress as much as dreamt of her presence there. But though Mammy stood like an ebony statue, she took care not to lose a single word of the conversation. For she had just seen Ephra'm who, with his eyes bunged up with crying, had blubbered out

a story that Mammy, with all her experience of Tudor, found it hard to believe.

Tudor shut the door carefully. Then he sat down on the window-seat, and began to drum drearily with his fingers on the lattice.

"I'm fairly run to earth, Joyce," he said at last, and didn't say anything more for a long time.

Joyce came and stood over against him. "Go through with it, if you please, Tudor," she said steadily. "Of what are you afraid? I shall never betray you. And if I can I will aid you."

Perhaps, knowing Joyce as well as he did, Tudor was afraid of what she would think of him, although he knew he was safe from her reproaches. "'Tis Mr. Fauce who is most in fault!" he burst forth at last.

"In fault for what? Pray speak it out, Tudor," said Joyce.

Tudor did speak it out. And considering what he had to say, it was scarcely surprising that he found it difficult. Sullen as it was, his face was dyed with shame before he had finished.

"You know I promised the Commissary to game no more while I was at the College?" he began, and Joyce nodded, her face gone very white. "Well, I—broke my word,"—Tudor got it out with a gulp, looking anywhere but at Joyce. "'Twas Mr. Fauce who urged me to. And when I gamed and lost to others, he loaned me the money to pay them, until I got deeper and deeper into his debt.

Then he urged me to stake Ephra'm against all I owed him. He had me limed, and I yielded to him. We diced for the boy and I—lost."

Not a sound came from the black woman behind the curtain. Not a sound came from the little girl into whose ears the shameful story was being poured.

"Hang it, sister, have you nothing to say?" cried Tudor, impatiently.

"Speech is not so easy," said Joyce. "Besides, I have no mind to talk until I have thought of a means of getting Ephra'm back. It would break poor Mammy's heart to lose him."

Tudor moistened his lips, which were as dry as sawdust. "You are the only person who can serve me in the matter, Joyce," he told her. "It was for that I rode here to-day. 'Tis not true that the Commissary hath given me a holiday. I have slipped the leash unknown to anyone, and shall have to ride back through the night, and creep in by a way I know." He paused for a long time here, and then said as though he found a difficulty in getting the words out,

"Ephra'm is a debt of honour and must be paid, of course. But I want you to ask Mr. Fauce to keep the affair secret from Madam and the Commissary, and to give me time to buy the boy back at any price he likes to fix for him. Mr. Fauce would do anything to oblige you."

"Indeed he would not, Tudor," Joyce as-

sured him. "Since I refused the offer of his hand he is mortally offended with me, and comes here no more."

"Nay, he attaches no importance to your refusal," Tudor told her eagerly. "I have talked with him on the subject, and find he considers it but the caprice of a school-girl, and is confident that when he makes you his addresses again, you will have changed your mind."

"He is vastly mistook!" declared Miss Rolleston. Then suddenly she put her hand on her brother's arm. "Confess freely to mamma, Tudor," she urged. "She would never suffer one of our own people to be sold. She would buy Ephra'm back at all costs."

"I know that as well as you, sister," retorted Tudor, ungraciously. "But it's none so easy to own that you've"—Tudor jibbed at the word and then got it out—"broken your oath, let alone the hazard of its getting to the Commissary's ears. Not that I wouldn't do it if I thought it would get Ephra'm back," he added, looking out of the window with miserable eyes. "But it wouldn't. Nothing that Madam could offer would make Mr. Fauce give him up. Sometimes I think it's Ephra'm he's been angling for all along. You're the only person he'd do it for, Joyce. Will you, now that you know it is a matter of such moment, seek to persuade him to keep the matter close and to give me time to buy the boy back?"

"Yes," answered Joyce. She stopped a

torrent of words on her tongue with which she was about to express her passionate distaste for the business, saying instead practically, "How shall I get speech with him, though, Tudor? He never visits here now."

"Oh, you'll have to think out some way," said Tudor easily, immense relief in his voice. "But whatever you do, be wary, sister. For, Rolleston though I am, I don't deceive myself but that if the Commissary got wind of the story I should have to tramp. Up till now nobody knows aught about it save you and me, although Ephra'm has been going about lately with a face as melancholy as a foxhound's, which makes me wonder if the rascal suspects anything. I must set out now, though, if I am to keep my absence from the College undiscovered," he added, getting to his feet, "and I shall take Ephra'm along, on the chance of your making it all right for me with Mr. Fauce. I'll go to Madam's chamber, straightway, and make my adieux."

As Tudor left the room, Mammy Chloe came from behind the curtain and began to busy herself about her usual tasks. So quiet and unemotional was her manner that a stranger might almost have thought that she was ignorant of what had passed.

"Did you hear what we said, Mammy?" asked Joyce, staring at her in surprised concern.

"Yes, chile, I heerd," answered Mammy.

"But did you understand it, Mammy?" asked Joyce again, putting her arms round her.

"Yes, chile, I understand," said Mammy. "My heart mos' broke."

Joyce laid her fingers caressingly on the black woman's smarting eyelids. "Don't cry, Mammy," she said, "I'm going to persuade Mr. Fauce to let us buy poor Ephra'm back."

"I doubt I don't oughter 'low yo to, honey," said Mammy, her voice full of anguished uncertainty. "But de time I tink mah Ephra'm gwine belong to dat ar speckled viper I jes kain't bear it. He bad, cruel man, chile. He like de fox what kill fo' more dan he kin eat. Dey not tell yo', honey, 'case dey keep sich tings f'om a tender lil' chile like yo, but he 'mos' kill Field Cynthia's husband."

"Oh, Mammy!" cried Joyce, horror-stricken. "I knew that mamma was much averse to Cynthia's marrying off our own plantation, and that Sam was one of Mr. Fauce's hands, and that he had run away from him. But I never knew the reason. What did Mr. Fauce do to him?"

"Whip him, honey. Whip him 'mos' fro' de day. Sam he done crawl 'way to de swamp in de night. He nebber come back no mo'. He's feared Mars' Fauce fa'rly kill him ef he does."

"What had Sam done, Mammy?" asked Joyce, shuddering.

"He done been saucy, honey. Massa Fauce he tell him he not mek de furrows straight in de cornfields. Sam he up an'

say dat as much corn grow in de crooked furrows as in de straight ones. Massa Fauce he not gwine hab a servant 'spute wid him dat ar way, an he whip him like I tell yo." Mammy thought of Ephra'm's gentle, sad eyes and her own eyes saw blood. "Ef he gwine whip mah Ephra'm, I gwine kill him," she said slowly.

"But we're going to save Ephra'm from him, Mammy," said Joyce confidently. "I am going to scribe a letter, and then I want you to come down with me to the Quarters."

Dipping her quill in the ink-horn, Joyce took a sheet of paper from the little letter-press of Russian leather that was amongst her most treasured possessions, and dashed off a hasty note. She had sanded it, and was on the point of sealing it, when a sudden thought made her change her mind.

"I'm ready, Mammy," she said, and with the letter hidden from view inside her little red cloak, she led the way to Anthony's cabin.

"Knock, Mammy," Joyce directed when they got to the door. "And if you please, will you remain outside?"

As Mammy knocked there was an instant response in a virile voice bidding her come in. It was a very different reception from the one Mammy had obtained when she had invaded the cabin on a previous occasion. She opened the door, and her little charge entered.

Both Anthony and Nat were within. Nat was sitting on the edge of his bed, watching

malevolently while Anthony whittled away at a toy windmill, destined to afford the Brown Baby unlimited amusement the next day.

"Get up, Nat," said Anthony sharply, as Joyce appeared on the threshold, and Nat, who had continued to sit as though unable to believe his senses, did as he was told.

"I would see you alone, sir," said Joyce.

"Take yourself off, Nat," said Anthony, and with a scowl at him Nat obeyed. He would so infinitely have preferred to remain and find out what it was that had brought Miss Rolleston to the cabin at that hour in the evening. But the gentle, deprecatory look he received from the young lady herself considerably soothed his feelings.

After he was gone Joyce took a step forward in Anthony's direction. "You said you were my friend to-day, sir," she said, "I have come to ask you to prove it."

"I am yours to command, madam, now and always," said Anthony.

"Sir," said Joyce, "I am in bitter trouble. Those I care for are in danger and distress, and it rests with me to save them. But to do this I need a messenger who will be secret and very faithful."

"I am at your service, madam," said the quiet voice again.

Joyce drew out the letter from her cloak. "Then will you deliver this letter from me to Mr. Fauce, sir?" she asked.

She had made the request with the direct-

ness of a boy and with as little self-consciousness. Then all at once, under Anthony's eye, her cheek grew as rosy as a peach. Little Joyce in that moment had reached the brink of her childhood.

"Because I am your friend, madam, you must confide in me further," said Anthony, gravely.

"I cannot, sir," answered Joyce. "The secret is not my own. Oh," she cried reproachfully, "a friend would do my bidding without question!"

"We have different ideas of friendship, madam," said Anthony. "And since you have honoured me with yours, I claim the right it gives me to protect you when I think you need it."

"Read the letter, sir, and you do not trust me," said Joyce; "'tis unsealed."

Eyes the bluest in the world smiled into her own. "I trust you as I trust the truest and the bravest maid I know," said Madam's servant. "I revere you as I revere my dead and sainted mother. And I hold your truth as sacred as I hold my honour and my hopes of heaven. Say you believe me before I open this letter."

Joyce was silent.

"Say you believe me, madam," said Anthony, his hand on the seal of the letter, his eyes on Joyce's, and there was as much of command as of entreaty in his voice.

The anger died out of Joyce's face. "I believe you, sir," she said. "But after what

you have said, you will not open the letter, sure?"

"That will I, madam, with your permission," said Anthony, "since it concerns me."

"Concerns you, sir?" repeated Joyce, wondering.

"Yes, madam. For you no longer belong wholly to yourself now we are—friends," Anthony told her.

"Read the letter, sir," said Joyce, her head high, her voice very proud.

Anthony opened the letter and read it through.

"I see that you request Mr. Fauce to meet you at the dismantled fort in the woods tomorrow afternoon, madam?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Joyce, with no change of colour now.

"I see you add that you will come alone," Anthony added.

"Yes, sir," said Joyce again. For a second she lost her proud poise, and her glance was wistful. "If you understood my situation, sir," she said, "you would know why I cannot take Mammy with me."

"Nay, madam, I need no explanations," answered Anthony. "'Tis a clear night and Young Fire and I will come at Green Briars before Mr. Fauce has sought his couch."

A sudden embarrassment clouded Joyce's eyes and caused her voice to falter. It was such a shameful thing of which she had to remind him. "But the patrols, sir?" she said in a little voice. "Believe me, I had for-

got the danger to yourself. They scour the road at nights for those who ride abroad without permits."

Anthony laughed out almost gaily. "He would be a clever patrol, and a swift horse, madam, who would overtake Young Fire and me, an we willed it otherwise," he said. "Have no fear. Your missive shall be delivered."

CHAPTER XVII

A CANING

In the dinner-hour interval, the next day, Anthony sought out Mr. Slaughter. The overseer was sitting in the shade of the bullock-cart which brought the provisions to the field, taking his rest with the others. He needed it at least as much as they did, since from cock-crow to sundown he worked as hard as the most closely-driven hand. The scorching sun shone fiercely over the fields, and all day the workers had been drinking greedily of the water which the little negro "toters" carried round to them, as they laboured in the tropical blaze.

"Mr. Slaughter," said Anthony, standing before him, "I am going to treat you as a man of honour."

"Now that is uncommonly affable in you, lad!" returned the overseer.

"I am going to ask a favour at your hands," Anthony continued. "But should you find yourself unable to accede to it, I shall expect you to regard it as a confidence."

"I'm pleased to know your views, lad!" retorted Mr. Slaughter dryly. "What is it you want?"

"I want to have this afternoon at my own disposal," Anthony told him.

"Oh!" said Mr. Slaughter. "And suppose I deny you?"

"I should prefer to absent myself from the field *with* your permission, Mr. Slaughter!" Anthony hinted delicately.

"Knowing what I do, it perhaps mightn't prove too hard a job for me to keep you here under my eye," said Mr. Slaughter, with sarcasm.

"But as a man of honour, Mr. Slaughter, you could hardly take advantage of my confidence," Anthony reminded him, blandly.

"What have you in your mind to do, lad?" asked the overseer, with a touch of real curiosity.

"To return like a homing pigeon, after I've done it!" answered Anthony, adding in another tone, "I would tell you an I could, Mr. Slaughter—be assured of that."

"Well, seeing as you've done sassing, you can take your afternoon, lad," the overseer told him. "But you're to make up the time on Saturday, mind. I'll not have Madam done out of her just dues by you or anyone."

"Madam shan't suffer, I promise you, Mr. Slaughter," Anthony told him proudly, adding, however, a "Thank-you," that, afterthought as it might have sounded to anybody else, the overseer was quite satisfied with.

As it happened, Nat was working in the same field as Anthony. He gave his roommate such close attention at all times that it

did not take him long to discover his absence now. He waited for awhile, and then finding that he did not return, grinned maliciously. He was nursing up a big scheme of vengeance in his mind against his enemy, but in the meantime he was prepared to grasp at all minor opportunities of annoyance that came in his way. In consequence, he now approached the overseer, hat in hand.

"If you please, Mr. Slaughter," he observed, with an expression he endeavoured to make ingratiating, "there's something going on as you ought to know about."

"I daresay!" answered Mr. Slaughter. But looking at Nat more closely, a certain surprise appeared on his hickory countenance. "Why, what's come to you, Nat?" he exclaimed. "You never mean to say you've taken to washing!"

Nat scowled. It was a sore subject. "When you lodge with someone who does it every day of his life, it puts you in mind of it," he said apologetically. "Not that he thinks a bit better of you, however much you put yourself about," he added with a sudden snarl.

"Oh, so that's it, is it?" said Mr. Slaughter. "But what's this I ought to know about?"

"It's about him we was talking of," answered Nat. "He ain't doing his task. He's slunk off!"

"It's mighty considerate of you, Nat, thinking to do my work for me!" observed Mr. Slaughter sardonically. "And if I hadn't

given him leave to go, maybe I'd be more obliged to you for butting in than I am! I reckon you must have a powerful lot of time on your hands, though, to be able to go fanning about after other people's business like this."

Since it was the last idea Nat wished Mr. Slaughter to entertain, and as he didn't dare to actually contradict him, all he could do was to look deprecating.

"I was going over the big tobacco house, yesterday," continued Mr. Slaughter, in a conversational vein, "and I find it's got all littered up with a muck of straw and lumber. We shall want it cleared against it's time to strip the tobacco. As you've so much time to spare, Nat, what do you say to righting it up in the evenings?"

With Mr. Slaughter standing grim and square before him, his muscular hand grasping a whip with six feet of lash, what could Nat say but profess himself willing to meet his views in the matter? But the incident was tantamount to hammering the last nail into Anthony's coffin, as far as Nat was concerned.

The fact that Madam was still keeping her chamber made Joyce's expedition to the woods that afternoon fairly easy of accomplishment. She started from the house with Sukey in her train, although she had no intention of letting that fond but inquisitive damsel accompany her all the way. She had been careful to keep all knowledge of what she really intended to do from Mammy, well

knowing that, even with Ephra'm in the balance, the faithful black woman would never let her undertake such an enterprise alone. But after what Joyce had seen in Mammy's eyes last night when she was telling about Mr. Fauce's dealings with Sam, she judged it better that that gentleman and Ephra'm's mother should not meet.

The rendezvous which the little girl had selected was an old dismantled fort known to all dwellers on the Rappahannoc, and not far from the entrance to the woods. It was now in ruins, although there were still traces of the blockhouses from which the men who were guarding it used to fire, when the report that the Indians were approaching had caused everyone from the surrounding cabins to hasten there for protection. But those days were long since over, and sassafras and cedar-bushes growing up around it marked it as the scene of desolation. Weeds choked its entrance: cobwebs and creepers hung about its rotting logs.

Leaving Sukey at the edge of the woods, and bidding her await her return, Joyce went fearlessly to her appointment. As she neared the fort, the sight of a gentleman in a bloom-coloured coat pacing impatiently up and down in front of it, told her that, as Anthony had promised, her missive had been delivered.

The bloom-coloured coat was of superfine cut and mode, and a genteel figure Mr. Fauce made in it, with his diamond shoe buckles, his costly ruffles and his elegant cane. And had he

been meeting a princess of the blood he could scarcely have bowed lower than he did to little Joyce Rolleston in her red cloak.

"Welcome, madam," he said, and taking her hand led her to a seat on the mossy log of a fallen tree.

The air was sultry: the sky very blue, flecked with white clouds moving athwart it like sails. A black snake, of which Joyce had no fear at all, glided swiftly away through the bushes at their approach. A small freshly broken-off branch from a chestnut-oak tree near by, showed that a bear, after advancing as far as he considered safe on the bough, had broken off the end to eat it on the ground at his leisure. They were quite alone, and save for the cedar bird in the branches above them, and the rooting of a hog in the mast of the underbrush, no sound broke the stillness.

"I am much obliged to you for coming, sir," said Joyce simply.

"Madam, it is a happiness," Mr. Fauce told her, bowing again. "You have but to hint a wish and I fly to execute it."

"Do you know why I am come, sir?" asked Joyce.

"Nay, madam, I am all impatience to hear it!" answered the gentleman.

Joyce's face fell. "I had hoped you might have guessed, sir," she said regretfully. "But since you have not, I will tell you in as few words as I can find. And if I do not express myself very well, will you, if you please, remember that it is a very difficult subject for

me to converse with you about ? ”

“I will remember, madam,” said Mr. Fauce, his gaze intent.

“Brother Tudor rode over from his College yesterday to see me on a particular errand,” Joyce told him. “He told me that he had been gaming with you and had lost. You could not have known, sure, sir, that in so doing he was breaking his word to the Commissary? It is hard for me to tell you this, sir, since we Rollestons have ever put the point of honour first.”

Joyce was too earnest to be embarrassed, but in the shame of the admission her head had drooped like a sapling before the wind. Mr. Fauce’s regard missed no change in the sensitive face. He also caught the falter of her voice as she went on,

“If the Commissary should come to know of it he would be incensed against Tudor, and would expel him the College. Also it would give much pain to my mamma. To ask your indulgence in helping us to keep the matter secret is one of the reasons why I have come to you to-day, sir.”

“I shall hope to satisfy you, madam,” said Mr. Fauce. But if his bow was low, his tone was non-committal. Joyce had to stoop her pride before she could continue.

“There is another matter, sir,” she said, her voice more and more unsteady. “Tudor says that he staked Ephra’m against his debts to you and that he lost. Ephra’m has been Tudor’s playmate and companion all his life,

sir. He is the son of my black Mammy, who is very dear to me. I have come to ask you of your generosity to give Tudor time to buy him back from you. In the meantime, I have brought you such trinkets as are really my very own, and that I have a right to dispose of, if you will suffer them to go towards his purchase."

As she spoke the little girl took out of her beaded purse an amber necklet, a little gold pendant and a silver hand-ring set with a beryl stone, and held them eagerly in Mr. Fauce's direction.

"Put up your trinkets, madam," said Mr. Fauce, waving them aside. He dropped a silken knee to the sward. "Say you will marry me, madam," he begged.

Joyce's eyes grew dark with pain. "I cannot, sir," she told him.

"Not to make me the happiest of men, madam? Not to become the mistress of one of the amplest fortunes and the fairest plantations in Virginia? Not to regain your mother's favour, to give her son back to your nurse, and to ensure your brother's safety?"

"Do you make it a condition, sir?" cried Joyce. "Oh, I had not thought any man could be as ungenerous as that!" she added, her scorn flaming out.

"All is fair in love and war, madam. And I have too much at stake to throw away any chance," answered Mr. Fauce bitterly. "Madam, I ask you for the last time—will you marry me?"

"No, sir," said Joyce, "I cannot marry where I do not love. But believe me, sir, I am grieved to hurt you. And if I have ever answered you with rudeness or ill-feeling I humbly crave your pardon."

Mr. Fauce's eyes—and it was the one defect in his handsome face that they were too near together—narrowed. "Why did your brother not crave the favour from me himself, madam?" he asked.

Joyce's face flushed as red as the cardinal flower in the bush beside her. But she looked at Mr. Fauce honestly. "He thought you would be more apt to grant it to me than to him, sir," she said, with extreme candour.

"And Miss Rolleston was not above trading on my attachment to her?" enquired Mr. Fauce with a sneer.

The flush faded out of Joyce's cheeks. She looked at Mr. Fauce with wide-open eyes. "'Twas for another I craved your kindness, sir," she said. "I would not for all the world have asked you for anything for myself."

"I make you my compliments, madam!" cried Mr. Fauce fiercely. "But permit me with a like frankness to tell you that a man might think lightly of a maid who wrote to ask him to meet her secretly in the woods."

"If he were a gentleman he would not!" said Joyce, as white as a lily, but facing him fairly.

Mr. Fauce's eyes narrowed still further. "No money can buy your servant from me, madam," he told her. "But if you like to

accept him as a free gift from my hand, you can do so."

Joyce swayed a little where she sat. "Your offer sounds generous, sir," she said, "but I do not think you mean it generously."

"And why not, madam?" asked Mr. Fauce, with a taunt in every word. "Some maids, I take it, would scruple to take a gift from the hands of a man whom they had refused. But it seems Miss Rolleston is not of these!"

"No, sir, I am not of these," said Joyce, "but you make it very bitter for me to accept."

"Then you do accept, madam?" gibed Mr. Fauce.

A vision of Mammy's tortured mother's face rose up before Joyce's eyes. "Yes, sir, I accept," she said, and dropping him the lowest and saddest curtsey in the world, turned to go.

Mr. Fauce put himself in front of her. "Even a poor gift merits some thanks, madam," he said, "and mine is one of value."

"Sir, I thank you," said Joyce, but some men would rather have been struck than thanked like that.

Again she attempted to go, but Mr. Fauce caught her wrist. "Since you like me well enough to ask me to meet you—I have your letter, madam, and it will ever remain a dear and treasured memento of your regard—will you not take a warmer farewell of me?" he asked.

"Release me, sir!" cried Joyce, struggling. But a dove might as well have tried to escape from a hawk. Mr. Fauce tightened his hold. "Why so restive, my charmer?" he mocked. "A kiss is but a little matter, after all!"

The next instant Anthony had sprung from the shelter of the blockhouse, had caught the gentleman's cane from his hand, and with a smart cut had wealed the smiling, evil face from brow to chin. Then he turned to Joyce with a bow.

"You will permit me to attend you home, madam?" he enquired formally.

"If you please, sir," said Joyce. She ran to him like a child. "Oh, sir, how glad I am that you are here!" she cried.

"So it is you again, fellow!" cried Mr. Fauce. The weal across his face was red and angry and his narrowed eyes were like a snake's. "We had a tolerable score to settle before. Judge to what proportions it has grown now! As for you, madam, your refusal of my hand becomes less difficult to understand. I give you joy of the convict lover you have chosen!"

"You shall answer to me for this!" cried Anthony, while Joyce gave a little inarticulate cry, like the twitter of a partridge when a dog has flushed it.

"Nay, a gentleman fights not with convicts!" sneered Mr. Fauce.

"Nevertheless, you shall fight with me," Anthony told him. "In the meantime I will keep your cane, sir. It is still at your service

should you trouble the lady further. And now, madam, since you have done me the honour to accept my escort, shall we go? "

Tudor and Ephra'm were saved. But little Joyce Rolleston would never be a child again.

A fortnight later, Mr. Fauce struck once more.

Early one Sunday morning an order was brought to Anthony from Madam, who was now recovered from her fever, to attend her and her daughter to church. As the church was a good seven miles off, he was to be at the Great House with the horses at ten o'clock.

Punctual to the minute, Madam's English servant was at the door. He held his mistress's stirrups, he mounted them carefully, and then on a finer horse than even Archduke, followed them at a rigorous distance behind.

Sunday was a busy day in old Virginia. To begin with, everybody went to church, however far away from it they might live. Failure to do so was followed by a heavy fine. From almost impossible distances the planters and their families rolled up in their coaches, or if the church was near a river, in their barges, or like Madam and Joyce, to-day, rode on horseback. And once the service was over friends and neighbours who had no chance of seeing each other during the week walked and promenaded together in the churchyard.

Inside the church from their high-backed pews the Virginian ladies and gentlemen sang the hymns that were "lined" out to them and listened to the minister's homily. Room was found for a few old and privileged servants in some remote corner or gallery, but the majority remained in the churchyard.

Anthony was not among the privileged few who were permitted to attend the service.

"Watch outside with the horses," Madam told him, and, followed by her little daughter, passed through the church door. In the aisle she was met by a bowing churchwarden who saw that she was provided with a seat befitting her quality.

Advertisements of importance were always pinned on the church doors. And Anthony, reading them idly as he waited, came without any warning on the following one:—

"This is to give notice that unless Sam, a runaway negro belonging to Mr. Fauce of Green Briars, who is lying out hid in the swamps, return home within one month from this date, it shall be lawful for any persons to kill and destroy him by any ways and means as they in their discretion shall think fit."

The justice's seal to the proclamation attested its legality.

Late that evening, and it seemed to him far into the night, Anthony heard Field Cynthia from her open cabin door singing that desolate negro hymn beginning, "Sometimes I feel lak a motherless chile," which in its

plaintive cadences is the saddest thing on earth. "I wonder whar my husband done gone," sang Field Cynthia, and so on right through the heartbroken plaint that was kept so jealously from white folks' ears in old Virginia.

It was only when the Brown Baby stirred and cried in his sleep that she stopped.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RIFLE

It was August, and the sun, if possible, was hotter still. Every breeze had ceased. In the pine woods there was absolute stillness. The needles no longer chafed against each other, and the tops of the trees were motionless. In the forests the young turkey-cocks had begun to strut, and the young hens to leap, while the delighted "Peep! peep! peep!" of the little partridges told that they too had taken wing. The parched cattle were in the streams. Flies were around in myriads.

In the orchards the peaches hung rosy red. In the cornfields the corn was in tassel. In the tobacco fields the plants were three feet high, and the clammy moisture beginning to appear on their leaves told Mr. Slaughter that they were ripe and ready for cutting.

These were dreary days for Nero and Hellion, as they looked with fierce bloodshot eyes from the bars of their iron cage at an outside world whose pleasures they were seldom allowed to share, since it had occurred to none of Madam's servants lately to run away. Still, their solitude was often enlivened by a visitor. This visitor always

came alone, and always at night. He generally brought with him, too, some succulent dainty, cooked by Field Cynthia, and saved from his own supper. As Nero and Hellion were fed on Indian corn and only allowed meat after a chase, they found such little offerings highly acceptable. This visitor had a firm young voice and keen, understanding blue eyes, and his "Good dogs, then!" had a pleasant sound. Nero and Hellion began to feel that he would be an agreeable person to go for a run with.

It was September. The heat in the afternoon was still almost unbearable. But in the early morning the air was fresh and cool, and the dews were heavier. Wild hops made the air fragrant in the forests: wild grapes gave out a rich aroma as of wine. The cattle fed on the tall reeds in the river. Majestic white swans sailed on the Rappahannoc. Every variety of wild fowl haunted the creeks and freshets. Golden rods and Michaelmas daisies were in bloom, and the world was red and yellow with the turning foliage of the Virginian creeper.

Throughout the month rain fell heavily. There were violent storms of thunder and lightning, and the negro women as they ran from the kitchen to the Great House, more often than not did so with their aprons thrown over their heads.

In the cornfields the beautiful silken tassels hung from stalks at least twelve feet high. The tobacco fields were in stubble, and the

plants themselves, after being cut and cured, were being stripped of their leaves in the tobacco houses.

The wild turkeys were in their prime. They had begun to grow fat and were delicious eating. Now that nuts and fruit were abundant, the flesh of the racoon, too, was a highly prized delicacy. Every moonlight night, calls to the dogs on a cow-horn from the direction of the woods told that a merry coon hunt was in progress, while the savoury odours of roast 'possum hung perpetually about the quarters, making the little negroes' mouths to water.

For Anthony there was neither coon nor 'possum hunt, and the wild turkeys remained undisturbed for him. Every evening saw him at Mr. Gookin's store. In a month from now he calculated that he would have saved up enough to buy the precious rifle that was to give him his freedom.

As for Nero and Hellion, their visitor had become so friendly with them that he would put his hand through the bars of their cage to stroke their heads or gently pull their ears. But he was not always caressing. He divided his offerings now, calling on each dog by name to receive them, and when, in defiance of orders, Nero fell upon the portion intended for Hellion, or vice versâ, the offender found himself being firmly beaten over the head with a switch. The necessity for such punishment became of rarer and rarer occurrence. But when it was given the dogs submitted to it as they would

have done from the hand of a master.

It was October. And after a pecuniary exchange had been effected with Mr. Gookin, coupled with a promise of eternal secrecy, Madam's servant now owned a rifle as well as a horse. He hid it in the hollow of a tree which he scoured until it was as dry as a powder horn and began to make preparations for flight.

But Nat had not been nursing his hatred for nothing. Those leading questions which Anthony had put to him in the beginning had been unwise ones. But then Anthony had always underrated Nat's intelligence.

He would have had a livelier appreciation of it, if, on the evening when he hid his rifle, his eyes had been able to pierce the darkness sufficiently to distinguish the figure which, not a coil's cast distant, skulked in the long grass, watching his every movement. When the unseen watcher saw him actually place the rifle in the tree, he chuckled in silent rapture. His enemy had been given into his hand.

The watcher was Nat, of course. And that night he thought out many things. Now that he knew where it was hidden it would have been easy enough to take the rifle unknown to anyone and destroy or otherwise dispose of it. But he was fairly frightened at the thought of having to live under his room-mate's eye with such a secret as that to carry. In the end, he decided that an open betrayal would be the safest, since in that case he could invoke the protection of the authorities for himself.

Besides, and this was a point which finally decided him, it would bring so many unpleasant things in his enemy's way. For a convict to possess arms in Old Virginia was a serious offence. A whipping from the constable, in addition to the confiscation of the rifle, was the least Anthony could look for. True, Nat himself, like a good many other people who had no business to, kept a rifle, hidden away in a secret place. But it was to nobody's interest to divulge the fact, since Nat had never in his life roused anybody's hatred by ostentatiously flourishing such "quality" habits as a daily wash before their eyes.

In an ordinary way, a word in Mr. Slaughter's ear would have been amply sufficient. But Nat had no intention of taking Mr. Slaughter into his confidence again on the subject of Anthony. The many weary hours he had spent clearing out the tobacco house had not been without their effect on him.

Pretending to be asleep, Nat, night after night, watched Anthony's preparations with malicious enjoyment. He saw him get ready a little tin case containing flint and steel and tinder. He noticed, too, that he sold no more corn to Mr. Slaughter, grinding his surplus stock at night, and husbanding it in a bag which, with infinite labour, he had made out of one of the twilled cotton shirts Mr. Slaughter had provided him with.

It was at this time that the Brown Baby sickened and drooped. He grew heavy-eyed.

He no longer played with the necklet of water-melon seeds Field Cynthia had strung for him, or with the collection of feathers dropped from the wild-fowl which Anthony had presented him with. He no longer laughed when the crows, settling on the ripe corn in vast quantities, were scared off by exasperated and perspiring field-hands. He ceased to have anything but the most languid and weak little smile for the big friend who, working at his mother's side, had contributed so largely to his enjoyment of life during the preceding months.

Soon he stopped coming to the field at all, and Field Cynthia, dry-eyed, but with a face it haunted one to look at, remained at home to nurse him. Every resource the plantation possessed was at her disposal. Her neighbours, with the ready sympathy and real kindness which sickness always rouses in the black people, were more than ready with help. New milk and the most nourishing broths and jellies came from the Great House. Madam and Joyce shared the nursing with her, day and night. The negroes and indented servants trod softly as they passed the cabin on the way to the fields. One could almost have sworn that the grim overseer himself blew his horn less loudly in the mornings for fear of disturbing the sick child.

There came a day when one of Madam's hands was seen riding recklessly in the direction of Fredericksburg, telling everyone

importantly that he was "gwine fotch de doctor." Such an event was rare on Madam's plantation and foreboded the worst.

The doctor came. Madam waited for his coming, and went with him to the cabin where Joyce kept watch with Field Cynthia. The Brown Baby lay in the latter's arms tossing fretfully. But he was a Brown Baby no longer. The rich glossy colouring had departed from his skin, leaving it a dull whitish grey. His crisp black curls had rusted, and stood out from his tiny head like wool. From a fat dimpled ball he had become a mass of skin and bones. He was no longer pretty. But he was very pitiful.

The doctor was a kindly man. He gave the little fevered child a cooling drink, which, however, he could not get him to take. He suggested that it might be better for him to lie on the bed than in his mother's arms, and Madam ordered sheets of the finest to be fetched from the Great House for his little body to rest upon. The doctor then left, ordering the cabin to be kept very quiet. He had done all he could.

"Will the child recover?" asked Madam, going outside with him.

"Only by a miracle, Madam," he answered, shaking his head. "I fear me 'tis a hopeless case."

Madam went back to the cabin saddened, but prepared to break the news to the poor mother so that the shock would be less dreadful to her when it came. But Field

Cynthia had read the doctor's verdict in his face, and with hungry eyes bent over the bed where the poor baby whimpered feebly, and tossed his burning arms from the sheets, querulously beating off Madam, and even Joyce, to whom on ordinary occasions he was affable, with a tiny fist no bigger than a chinquapin nut.

"If it is God's pleasure to take your little one, my poor Cynthia, you must try to bear it with Christian fortitude," said Madam, but very kindly and gently.

Cynthia curtseyed, her eyes still devouring the little face on the bed, and Madam went out softly, telling Joyce that she would come to relieve her at midnight.

Joyce couldn't say anything. But she put her arms round Field Cynthia. And then for the first time the tears came to the woman's eyes.

"'Ain't it jes de hardest thing in all de worl' Mis' Joyce, dat I got to lose mah baby?" she asked simply.

Anthony came in, treading softly. "How is he, Cynthia?" he asked.

"De doctor been see him, sah," Field Cynthia told him. "He doan say much. But I see in his eye he tink dat chile go in de dawnin'."

At the sound of Anthony's voice the Brown Baby raised his heavy eyes. From a long way off the tiny mind was coming back. "M-a-n!" he said in a voice no louder than the chirp of a wren.

Anthony snapped his fingers at him, and at that never-failing joke, the ghost of a smile came into the Brown Baby's eyes. He made a feeble movement in the direction of the snapping fingers, and when Anthony gave him one, the claw-like little hand clutched on to it. Anthony knelt beside the bed without a movement. By-and-by the Brown Baby's eyelids drooped and his head tossed less restlessly. Soon it lay quite still.

"Does yo see dat? Dat chile sleeping good and sound!" Field Cynthia breathed.

When Madam came at midnight her servant raised an imperious hand for silence, and with the other maintained the hold that meant that with the dawning the Brown Baby was to wake to life instead of death. But to maintain that rigid pose through the long hours was not an easy thing to do.

The history books say nothing about Anthony's vigil with the Brown Baby. But the end of the story was to come six weeks afterwards, and of that they are very full. For without that act of kindness to a little slave child, a certain event in Virginian history which has often been told in prose and verse would have had a less glorious ending.

When the Brown Baby awoke at last with a squeak of displeasure against everybody, in that they had permitted him to be ill at all, Anthony was free to go.

"I kain't say nuffin, massa. But mah heart full up to de brim," said Field Cynthia as he departed.

The horn had sounded some time before. But in front of his own door Anthony was surprised to find a little group consisting of Mr. Slaughter, Nat, and the constable.

"Come here, lad," said the overseer, while the constable looked at him ferociously. He had a cruel face and held a loaded gun in his hand.

"So this is the rascal, is it?" he asked.

"That's him, sir," answered Nat eagerly. But a glance at Mr. Slaughter's face decided him to keep his zeal within bounds.

"What's this about your having a rifle, lad?" asked the overseer.

So that was it! Anthony's face whitened a little, but he said no word.

"Where have you stowed it? Come! out with it!" cried the constable.

He would have had to ask the question a good many times before he got any answer, to judge by the way Anthony looked at him.

"An obstinate young dog, as I can see with half an eye," said the constable. "But as this other lad here says he can lead us to the spot where he keeps it, I don't know as we need wait."

"Am I to show the place, sir?" asked Nat uneasily, of Mr. Slaughter.

"You're to do whatever the constable bids you," returned the overseer.

"Then lead off," said the constable.

Nat did lead off, the others following in absolute silence. But when they reached the entrance to the wood Nat stopped dead.

"I'm in my duty in telling on him, Mr. Slaughter!" he protested.

"That must be a satisfaction to you, Nat," answered Mr. Slaughter.

"Get on, can't you, lazybones!" cried the constable, and touched Nat up with his foot in a way that made him skip.

In the same absolute silence they walked through the wood until they came to an ivy-covered oak. "It's in that there tree!" said Nat.

Anthony's eyes pierced through the speaker's back, and Nat turned and looked at him just as though he had received a call. Whatever threat the blue eyes conveyed left Nat oddly subdued.

The constable put his arm into the hollow of the tree, and with an exclamation of satisfaction drew out the rifle which the boy before him had obtained with such incredible industry and self-denial through all the months before.

Mr. Slaughter's heavy hand dropped swiftly and suddenly on to Anthony's arm, evidently forestalling some movement on the latter's part that he had been expecting.

"That's enough, lad," he said. "You're treed. Best make up your mind to it. The constable's gun's loaded and he'd think no more of putting a charge of duck-shot into you than I should of shooting a rabbit."

The gentleman whose proclivities were thus frankly described turned on Anthony truculently.

"Who let you have the rifle?" he demanded.

Anthony's lips tightened down.

"Oh, well, I'll soon get it out of you," said the constable brutally. "Loan me your whip, will you, Mr. Slaughter?"

The overseer made an obliging feint of passing it over, which somehow left it in his own hands. Apparently oblivious of the fact that he was still holding it, he said in casual tones, "Before you'll be able to get the name out of that lad, you'll have scarred him up so that the tale will be all over the Rappahannoc."

"Well, what if it is?" asked the constable. "The rascal has acted agin the law. The justice will uphold me."

"It's to the justice that you'll have to hand the rifle over, now that you've confiscated it, isn't it, constable?" asked Mr. Slaughter nonchalantly.

"Yes," answered the constable, looking puzzled. "To who else?"

"Well, I *might* be able to think of someone who'd find a handsome rifle like that quite as useful as even his honour!" answered Mr. Slaughter, with meaning.

A slow grin widened the constable's ugly face. "I take your point, Mr. Slaughter," he said. "And I don't know but what I won't content myself with confiscating the rifle and letting you do the whipping—if you'll undertake not to mention the business to outsiders."

"We'll both keep our own council," the overseer agreed. "And I'll engage to do all the whipping that's needed."

For some unaccountable reason Nat shook in his shoes.

The constable tucked the rifle—Anthony's rifle—under his arm as though he liked the feel of it. It was more than flesh and blood could stand. But before the boy could put whatever purpose he had in his mind into practice the overseer's grip was on his arm again.

"Quiet, lad, I tell you!" he said sternly. "You're fair cornered!"

But the constable was evidently inclined for more perquisites if he could get them. "I feel it would be no more than my duty to search his cabin," he observed.

"I'm quite agreeable as you should," Mr. Slaughter told him.

"He ain't got another rifle there, I swear," said Nat hastily. "I know all that's in that there cabin."

The constable looked at him with sudden suspicion. "I've a mind to search it, all the same," he said, looking at Mr. Slaughter.

"And I've a mind to go with you!" said the overseer, looking at Nat.

Again in absolute silence the cavalcade of four set out.

On reaching the cabin it almost seemed as though Nat would have barred the overseer's way. "If so bein' as it's taking up too much of your time, Mr. Slaughter," he observed,

obligingly, "I can show the constable all 'is parts of the cabin myself!"

"Who knows but what it may be time well spent, Nat," observed Mr. Slaughter, philosophically.

Though the constable looked hard, he found no more rifles. But he found a bag half full of ground corn.

"Blame me! but you feed your hands uncommon well," he said.

"Madam never did hold with stintin' 'em," answered the overseer. It was fortunate that he was looking out of the window, or he might have recognised that the twilled cotton out of which the bag was made had originally served another purpose.

After having exhausted the few resources the cabin possessed, the constable lifted up the lid of the potato cellar.

"What's in here?" he asked.

"Only sweet potatoes," Nat assured him fervently.

The constable sniffed a little. "Well, if it wasn't sweet potatoes I should say it was pork," he observed.

"Fetch it up, Nat," ordered the overseer, and after Nat's coyness to obey had been overcome, the constable's conjecture proved to be the true one.

"So you've been killing Madam's hogs, Nat?" said the overseer. "Well, you know what I've always promised you if I found you out in it. But I'll attend to you presently!"

He saw the constable, who was still affec-

tionately hugging his rifle, off the premises. Then he remained looking half thoughtfully for a moment at the boy whose hopes had been taken from him. But he didn't say anything beyond a gruff, "Get along to your tasks, lad. It's long past the time."

Anthony didn't say anything either. But the overseer, watching him go, admired the courageous way in which he carried his shoulders. But it was the courage of despair, and Mr. Slaughter knew it.

The overseer turned to Nat. And at the sight of his face the boy screamed like a rabbit when the fox has caught it.

There was a coil of rope in a corner of the cabin. The overseer picked it up. "You come along with me, Nat," he said, and took him to the peach orchard.

While he cut switches for himself, choosing them with care and discrimination, Mr. Slaughter talked. "Hog-stealing," he said, "as every soul on this plantation knows, is a thing that I can never suffer to be overlooked. It's a bad habit, Nat, and I'm going to cure you of it. You come right here."

Nat came at about the same pace a tortoise would have done.

"Take off your shirt," ordered the overseer.

Nat cowered before him, weeping and protesting.

"If you don't take it off yourself, Nat, I'll take it off for you—in shreds!" the overseer warned him.

His voice was quite dispassionate, but Nat

took it off. Then Mr. Slaughter, but without haste or violence, took the rope he had brought with him and tied him to a peach tree. He next picked up a switch from his bundle, giving some thought to the selection. "By the time I've finished with you, Nat," he said, "Madam's hogs will go safe for you. And if it teaches you—as a little lesson by the way, as you might say—what a white-livered, sneaking toad you are, there won't be any harm done!"

Mr. Slaughter had once asserted that he was the best hand to give a whipping on the Rappahannoc. When he let Nat down he had proved the truth of his words.

Nat looked more dead than alive. "Please Mr. Slaughter, may I go to bed?" he wailed.

"No, you mayn't!" answered Mr. Slaughter, unsympathetically. "But you can get you to the cornfields and help to scare the crows off. The mere sight of you ought to be enough to do it!"

It rained heavily during the day. But Mr. Slaughter had no pity, and kept Nat in the open, although he sent Anthony to the tobacco house to strip tobacco. Once or twice he came and stood over against him to give him a brief direction, but he never mentioned the rifle.

In the dinner-hour he came again. "I've been seventeen years in Virginia, lad," he said, without anything to lead up to the remark.

Anthony brought his mind back from the thoughts of his overwhelming trouble with an effort.

"Would you not lieber have your abode in England, Mr. Slaughter?" he enquired, since the overseer's observation seemed to require some sort of reply.

"The turkey would lieber eat grasshoppers than tobacco worms," said Mr. Slaughter, in what was for him a flight of poetry. "But when he's confined to the tobacco fields he has to take what he can get. It's not a bad life here," he added, "and I've tried to do my duty to Madam all the years I've been with her. But time and again a feeling comes over me that the cliffs of old England would be a good sight for sore eyes. I've an old mother at home, too, that I set a good deal of store by."

"Then why don't you go back, Mr. Slaughter?" asked Anthony.

"Jobs aren't as readily come at over there as here," answered the overseer. "And I've the old mother to think of as well as me. What I remit her by Captain Ticklefoot more than keeps the old body in comfort. I can mind times and again, at home, when I've had to draw my belt tight to keep down the hunger. Likely as not it would be the same if I went back now. But seven months, which is all the time you've been here, lad, doesn't seem so over and above much to set against seventeen years, does it?"

"If you're in the same boat with me, Mr.

Slaughter, I'm in good company," was Anthony's answer to that.

"Sass?" asked Mr. Slaughter.

"No, truth," Anthony told him, and the overseer moved away.

It continued to rain, but when Mr. Slaughter went his evening rounds, as usual, he found a huddled-up figure beside a cabin he had visited once before that day.

As he approached, the figure attempted to slink away, but the overseer bade it halt.

"Is that you, Nat?" he enquired.

"Yes, sir," answered Nat, but between cold and fright he could scarcely get the words out.

"Well, what are you doing out here?" demanded the overseer. "Haven't you had enough for one day, you varmint? Get in with you out of the rain."

But though Nat quailed at the order he made no attempt to obey it.

"Why don't you get in when I tell you, 'stead of standing there like a half-drowned rat?" demanded Mr. Slaughter, genuinely astonished at this obstinacy in a person with whose education he had that day taken such pains.

"I daresn't!" Nat whispered. "*He's* inside!" And to judge by his expression, it might almost have seemed as though he feared the person he referred to more even than the redoubtable Mr. Slaughter himself.

A touch of grim amusement came into Mr. Slaughter's face. "Well, I might fancy more

agreeable interviews than the one you're likely to have, Nat," he admitted. He caught hold of the boy, and although Nat howled at the pressure of his hand on his bruised flesh, he kicked open the cabin door and bundled him in, neck and crop. He then continued his rounds with a more than usually sardonic look on his face.

Nat lay crouching where he had been thrown, staring up at Anthony. And if ever terror was imprinted on a human face it was imprinted on his. Anthony came and stood over him. And Nat saw that he had reason for his fear. He began to shake like a man in an ague.

"Get up, you blackguard!" cried Anthony, with a contemptuous, though searching kick. Nat screamed in sharp pain, but did as he was bid.

"Now then!" said Anthony. He took Nat by the dripping collar and shook him as savagely as a fox-hound shakes the fox. He transferred his grasp from Nat's collar to his throat and pinned him up against the wall, still shaking, so that Nat's bullet head rattled against the logs. "What do you think of yourself, you tale-bearing scum?" he cried. "I'm going to shake the life out of you, but first I'll know the reason why you've played me such a scurvy trick. Why did you do it, you treacherous hound?"

Nat was a pitiable spectacle. Water trailed from his every garment as he stood there, pinned against the wall, with Anthony's hand

on his throat. Blotches of blood had soaked through from his shirt to his jacket. He was shivering with cold, and the shadows under his eyes were as purple as blackberry juice. There was a living terror in his look. But there was something else, too.

"I done it," he said slowly, "because you think me that."

"Think you what?" asked Anthony, and Nat's head beat another fierce tattoo against the logs.

"A 'ound!" answered Nat, when he could get his breath again.

Anthony laughed bitterly. "Well, and aren't you one?" he enquired, his fingers at a cruel pressure.

"If I am, it don't make it any easier to have it cast in my teeth!" said the scarecrow under his hand, with sudden passion. "It don't make it any easier to have to lodge with a spark who every time he touches you, if it's only to 'it you, looks as sick over it as a dog arter he's had a scrap with a skunk. I was happy here till you come," he added furiously. "Curse you!"

"Happy? *Here?*" repeated Anthony incredulously. He still kept his fierce grasp on Nat's throat, but for the first time in their intercourse he was according him some attention.

"Yes, here," snarled Nat. "Oh, I know you're quality and have been used to having things different at home. But I haven't. I've lived in the streets. I've lain in the ash-holes.

You'd liefer ha' been shot than whipped. Well, whippings ain't nothing new to me. I've been whipped three times at Bridewell for picking pockets, and the justice sitting there calm and comfortable and saying he was doing it to save me from the gallows. I allus thought he was the hardest party I'd ever met with, till I saw you. Then I knew I'd lighted on a harder one."

Anthony's face as he listened almost seemed to bear out the indictment. But Nat was too surprised to find him listening at all, not to air as many of his wrongs as he could, in this first opportunity he had ever been given to do so.

"Things was a deal better for me here than anything I'd ever had at home," he continued, desperately. "I'd got a cabin to myself—till you come. I'd furniture that I was fair proud of—till I saw you didn't think no more of it than nothin'. I'd plenty of victuals. Oh, I'm sensible that you think 'em no better than hogs'-swill, but when you've been famished all your life it's a different breed of dogs. I'd mates as was good enough for me—though you wouldn't touch 'em, any more than you would me, with a pitchfork, if you could help it. I'd got used to my hand: it didn't trouble me a mite—till I saw the way you looked at it. Since then I could ha' cut it off! Curse you again, you——"

A warning touch on his wind-pipe choked the foul words on his tongue. The act reminded him of fresh injuries.

"That's it!" he said aggrievedly. "That's you! The Billingsgate I've been used to ain't fit for your fine gentleman's ears. Do you mind how you put me in the potato-cellar the first night you ever come, and for nothing more than naming you a——"

"The potato-cellar is still where it was!" said Anthony. The reminder was a simple one, but it had the effect of stopping the repetition of a choice expression.

The forced suppression added to Nat's other injuries. "And you'd do it, too," he said reproachfully, in reference to the unspoken threat. "You're that hard. You'd think no more of oversettin' me in it again, and me in this state, than if I was a dog. Not that you'd ever use a dog as you do me. I've remarked you giving a pat to every cur you come across—even them little mongrel coon dogs. I've watched you strokin' that there white horse of yours, which for high ways and wicked temper is just about a match for you. I've seen you a-feedin' that brown mouse that comes out o' the logs, till my fingers itched to throw sommat at it. I've heerd you pettin' that brat of Field Cynthia's till I've fair wondered at you. But me? Oh no! I wasn't never fit to throw a bone to."

"Well, you weren't for having me pet *you*, I suppose?" enquired Anthony impatiently, but staring at him.

"I was for having you do anything to me 'cept treat me as if I wasn't there," said Nat, getting the admission out with a gulp. "I'd

rather you'd a-give me hard words than none at all. Oh, I'll allow I might have been more obliging, but I was never half as bad to you as you was to me. You showed me you wasn't company for me from the start; you wouldn't lie in my bed; you made me keep my distance in the cabin; you looked at my hand like it was a snake. And all the time you was a-washing yourself, and a-setting yourself up above me, till I was clean eaten up with hate of you."

"How was I to know that my ablutions were giving you such prodigious offence, you oaf?" enquired Anthony, impatiently still, but with a suggestion of a grin beginning to soften his face.

"You might a-knowed it!" returned Nat, unreasonably. "I'm not a fool. I'm sensible that you're quality and above my bend. I know the pace you set 's allus going to be beyond me. But you'd no call to go thinking that because I didn't happen to know about things, I mightn't be wishful to learn 'em. Why, I've copied you till even Mr. Slaughter's remarked it. I've known the time when I've washed as much as twice in a week, a-hoping as you'd say something. But you never noticed no difference in me."

"Not even when you washed twice a week, Nat? That was uncommon obtuse in me!" said Anthony.

"Well, I'd never a-believed you'd have admitted as much!" said Nat. He hesitated a moment and then went on. "When you was

whipped that time you might a-thought I should be glad about it. Well, in a way I was, and then again I wasn't. It served you right, but I was as mad as a hornet that they durst do it to you. I allow I gibed at you a bit, but at the back of my mind, though you won't credit it, I'd a notion to offer to rub your back for you with some 'possum fat—it eases the smart considerable. I'm as partial as a negro to 'possum fat," he added, his eyes meeting Anthony's almost pleadingly, "and I was saving it up for my own supper."

"I rather conceived the remedy you suggested had another name!" observed Anthony, dryly.

"Meaning that about the negro plaster?" asked Nat, a patch of brick-red colour coming into the pallor of his cheeks. "I shouldn't a-said that unless you'd provoked me to it, and I didn't mean it. Not that I expect you to believe me about that there 'possum fat, though!"

The other's well-cut mouth closed down, and Nat sighed as he saw.

"There wasn't any chance for me to 'tend to you that night," he continued, drearily. "You've allus been able to shoot clear of any good offices such as me could do you. 'Soon as she hears of it, Mammy Chloe comes running with quality ointment from the Great House. Mr. Slaughter mixes a cordial for you, and brings it down with his own hands. Field Cynthia cooks your supper. Miss

Joyce comes to ask after your Honour's health. And talkin' about Miss Joyce," added Nat, admonishingly, "it wouldn't do you no harm to take an example by her. She's quality too, but when she lights on me about the plantation, it's always 'Good-day, Nat,' an' a nice smile. She ain't never too set above herself to be civil to folks, even to a convic' like me."

"Or like me!" said Anthony, and took his hand from Nat's throat.

"We're not in the same litter," said Nat, shaking his head. "An' you might think from what I'm saying that I'm jealous of them all taking notice of you. Well, I ain't. In a way I'm proud of it, or leastways I should be if you was to use me different. But you've used me like a rotten straw from the start, and telling on you about that there rifle was the only way I had of making you pay for it. I may be a 'ound, but whatever you do to me, you'll never get me to let on, as I'm sorry I did it."

"Take your jacket off, Nat," said Anthony, giving it a slight pull.

Nat cried out at the chafe the action gave to the raw flesh beneath. "I can't bear no more," he said. "Mr. Slaughter's wore out half a dozen switches on me already. I'd liefer you'd kill me right out than hit me again."

"I'm not going to hit you, you idiot!" said Anthony. "Do as I bid you." Between them they got the jacket off. But getting the shirt off, too, was going to be a more

grisly business. Anthony's teeth clicked with horror at what he saw.

"Here, get into bed, Nat," he said, "and I'll kindle a fire, and heat some water."

Nat, crying weakly, watched him as he performed both operations. Then he poured some water in a gourd and came up to the bed. "It's bound to hurt, Nat," he said, "but you'll be vastly easier after it's done. Don't make more pother than you can help."

He dressed Nat's back with fingers almost as gentle as Mammy's, tearing up his last remaining shirt, save the one on his back, for the purpose.

"What are you a-giving me your own shirt for?" asked Nat suddenly.

"To save my laundry charges!" answered Anthony.

"Why are you doing it, anyway?" Nat persisted.

"As a return for that 'possum fat," the other told him.

"Then you credit me about that?" asked Nat.

"Yes," said Anthony briefly. "But see here, Nat, you're shaking like a wheat-fan. You must have got a monstrous chill. I'm going over to the next cabin to see how the little one is, and I'll get Cynthia to favour me with some milk, and give it to you hot."

When Anthony came back from Cynthia's cabin, where the Brown Baby was fractious to a degree that assured his speedy recovery, he found that Nat had been thinking.

"If you're for making your escape through them drowned lands without a rifle, you can't never do it!" he burst out. "You'd starve, and the turkey-buzzards would pick you clean—let alone them putting the dogs on your trail and hunting you down. And if they got you from them alive, they'd brand you. How'd you be with your hair cut close to your ears and your cheek like my hand?"

"Well, scarce the ornament to Madam's plantation I am at present!" answered Anthony. "But I have said naught about escaping."

"All the same, I know you're going to do it," Nat declared. He drank the hot milk Anthony gave him in silence. "What should you say if I was to offer to loan you my rifle?" he asked, unexpectedly.

"I should say you were a simpleton, Nat," said Anthony, but with a nice look. "And I shouldn't take it."

"Because it's me as is offering it to you?" Nat demanded.

"Because I think it would be bad for the turkey-buzzards' digestion!" Anthony informed him. "But have done now, Nat, and get to sleep. You'll have occasion for all your strength to-morrow, for if Mr. Slaughter could put it on to you in the way he's done to-day, he's not likely to exempt you from your tasks. Good-night."

"Good-night!" answered Nat, and blubbered into his blankets.

But though he lay quite silent and after a

a while was to all intents asleep, he saw Anthony take up the case containing the flint and steel, sling the corn-bag over his shoulder and leave the cabin.

Two minutes afterwards Nat was up and dressed, although to struggle into his jacket was an agony. Judging that Anthony was at the stables, he wasted no time, but ran at breakneck speed to the place in Madam's garden set apart for the burial ground of the family. The sarcophagus at which he finally halted was a magnificent one, blazoned with the armorial bearings of the Rollestons. But one of its carved stones was loose, and in the hollow behind it Nat kept his rifle. It was not an ideal place to choose, but Nat was not burdened with fine feelings.

Securing the rifle, and making his way warily to the stables, he watched Anthony finish saddling up Young Fire, and with whispered words which the white horse understood as a command to keep quiet, led him out of the stable-yard.

Mr. Slaughter's big bay mare was in the next compartment. And shuddering, but with a look on his face of one who had decided that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, Nat saddled and bridled the powerful animal and followed Anthony on him at a safe distance.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SWAMP

Down the drive and out at the big gates Anthony led Young Fire, horse and man treading softly. From the blazoned coat-of-arms with which the gates were surmounted the puissant motto of his race "Je puis," shone in the moonlight. It acted on the boy like a rallying call. He was about to take his life into his hands. Without arms he was going to attempt what men with arms had died in failing to accomplish. Many a harrowing tale had he heard since he came to Virginia concerning those who, like himself, had sought escape from the land of bondage by way of North Carolina. He had nothing to guide him save the stars, and the moss on the trunks of the trees. To reach his haven he had to traverse that abode of all solitude and desolation, Lone Swamp, where the cypress trees grew from the waters, and where at every other step the ground quaked with treacherous quagmires in which horse and man, once engulfed, sank by inches and were seen no more. And if, by wading and swimming through the sunken holes and slashes, and pushing his way by Herculean efforts through the dense underbrush, he

should by any chance be able to traverse its dreary shades, he would then come to the deeper horrors of Alligator Swamp. Here slimy reptiles filled the ponds, and mystic fox-fires—that strange phosphorescent light given off from rotting woods—burned weirdly. Here, too, the ghost of Bacon, the ill-fated Cromwell of Virginian history, roamed evermore among the shadows, while rattlesnakes, and moccasins, and copper-heads crept and crawled along the surface of the ground. And when the dangers and dreads of Alligator Swamp had been surmounted, there was still before him that inexpressibly melancholy and repellent stretch of swamp, and marsh, and sunken lands which men have named the Great Dismal. And yet, with all this to face, Anthony leapt on Young Fire's back as the gates shut behind him, a happy boy again—a king in his own right—since at last he was free.

“Je puis,” he said aloud, and as though he were sending the words as a message to someone in the Great House. Then putting the shames of his bondage behind him he took Young Fire through the pine woods at a glorious pace. It was a pace the bay mare behind him had not the smallest chance of being able to keep up with. But as long as Nat could hear the horse's hoofs in the distance he did not care. He knew how slow the going would have to be soon.

There was a new moon, and myriads of little twinkling stars were in the heavens.

The effect was to make darkness visible as far as the place was concerned where the waters lay like pools of ink above slimy bottoms. In the exuberance of his spirits Anthony plunged boldly forward, scarcely checking his pace. The next instant Young Fire was knee-deep in liquid mud and his rider rode more cautiously. A snipe sprang from the reeds at his approach: a heron with a harsh scream took refuge in a cedar tree. Shrieks and hollow groans came out of the darkness. It was only the tops of the cedar trees rubbing together, but the effect was indescribably weird. Young Fire plashed ankle deep through the ooze, the impression of his hoofs being instantly filled up with water. Hanging mosses and grape-vines swept across Anthony's face; blackberry briars and brambles had to be pushed aside with every step. And when, for a second time, Young Fire's feet left solid bottom—if anything in this muddy quaking slough could be called solid—and were with difficulty extracted, Anthony decided to defer his further advance until the morning. This tardy resolution brought great relief to one who followed him on a bay mare, and who shivered and shook and hated it all with a hatred and loathing indescribable, but who still went on.

Anthony fastened Young Fire to a tree, and choosing the driest spot he could find, lay and waited for the dawn. Nat also chose the driest spot he could find. Exactly how

dry it was may be gathered from the fact that he had to keep changing his position when the warmth of his body made the waters ooze up around him. Once he was awakened from a fitful slumber by feeling some wild animal sniffing at his face. He shrieked aloud, and the creature, whatever it was, moved away.

"Anyone there?" called Anthony, and Nat held his breath.

Anthony got up and reconnoitred a little. But as it would have needed eyes as sharp as an owl's to have been able to pierce through the pitchy darkness of the thicket in which Nat had taken refuge, he discovered nothing, and returned to his place beside Young Fire, who, as though he too found the situation not to his liking, whinnied joyfully at his approach.

The morning light, though it made things less ghostly, scarcely improved their cheerfulness. Anthony found himself in a land of quaggy ridges, covered with undergrowth between which ran slimy canals, the home of otters and beavers and musk-rats. These canals were fringed with reeds on which Young Fire fed appreciatively. Anthony decided to defer preparing his own meal until he had put a greater distance between Pine Mount and himself.

More than once in the night he could have sworn that he heard the neighing of a horse close at hand, but it was only when he entered a sunken copse where the trees grew so near together as to shut out the sky that he

realised that he was being actually pursued. For with the shrubbery so dense that no sound could be heard at more than a hundred yards' distance, Nat had been obliged to follow almost on his heels. Soon the splash of a horse's hoofs behind him came unmistakably to Anthony's ears. Having no mind to be caught within rifle range of an enemy, if enemy it was, he doubled, so as to command a view of his unseen pursuer from behind.

The manœuvre was successful, and to Anthony's horror, he recognised Mr. Slaughter's bay mare. Few sights could have been less welcome. But after a moment he realised that the sturdy overseer could never in his life have sat a horse at the huddled-up slouch this rider was doing.

"Nat!" Anthony's voice was sharp with anger, and Nat nearly dropped from the bay at the unexpectedness of it.

Anthony rode up to him, grim wrath in every line of his face. "Your business here?" he demanded.

"I ain't got no business here. I know that as well as you," retorted Nat peevishly. "But you can't never slope your way through these 'ere nasty, soused, sloppy, tear-you-to-bits swamps without a rifle. I told you so at the start." His voice sounded querulous, but he was cold and wet, and strange pains were shooting all over his body.

"Go back!" said Anthony curtly, and without a word more, he took Young Fire past the bay, through the copse.

Nat, though he could scarcely keep his seat, followed him.

"You wouldn't let me loan you the rifle, so I was bound to come along with it," he said aggrievedly. "And a pretty sort of situation you've exposed us to, too!"

"Us!" Anthony's tone was expressive. "I scarce remember having pressed you for your company. Go back!" he ordered again, and put his horse at a sharper pace.

"I ain't a-going back!" Nat called after him, still trying valiantly to keep up.

Anthony faced about and watched his clumsy efforts with angry impatience. "I don't want you," he said.

"You've made that plain," said Nat. "But I'm a-coming."

Anthony wheeled Young Fire again and rode her at a wicked pace, considering the state of the ground. Then all at once he slacked his speed and waited for Nat to come up to him. "Oh, hang it, Nat," he groaned, "why don't you go back?"

"Because I run away with Mr. Slaughter's hoss!" answered Nat, and even to Anthony the argument was unanswerable.

"But why run away at all?" he demanded in exasperation. "I never knew you'd a mind to do anything of the kind."

"I hadn't!" Nat assured him fervently. "Do you imagine I'd a-left my warm nest from choice for this 'ere 'orrid slough o' despond? But I wasn't going to have you ate up by them turkey-buzzards—not likely."

The next minute he reeled in his saddle and would have fallen if Anthony had not put his arm round him. There was no doubt now but that the boy was seriously ill. It was scarcely to be wondered at, considering the exposure he had undergone in such an aguish situation, following on the top of the severe whipping Mr. Slaughter had given him.

"Here, hold on to me, Nat," said Anthony in a changed tone, "and let's think what's to be done with you."

Around them lay a desolate land of mud and water and slime. Foul exhalations came from the damp ground and the rotting vegetation.

"Are you acquainted with Lone Swamp, Nat?" Anthony asked. "Is there any place, think you, where we can seek cover?"

Nat's lips had gone blue. "There's on'y one dry spot about here as I knows on," he said, "and that's Sam's hiding-place."

"Sam's hiding-place?" repeated Anthony.

"Field Cynthia's Sam," Nat explained. "He ain't there now. He's gone off to join Blackbeard."

A vision of the notice he had seen fastened to the church door rose before Anthony's eyes, and he looked neither surprised nor shocked.

"Is anybody else acquainted with it?" he asked.

"I never heerd tell on nobody else being," answered Nat. "I come across it by chance, once, when Mr. Slaughter had dispatched me to the swamp to gather myrtle-berries for the

candles. I swore to Sam I wouldn't discover it to no one, an' I never have."

"Well, lead the way to it," said Anthony. "And as speedily as you can," he added with a glance at the boy's blue lips.

Nat rode on, Anthony supporting him, till they came to a mass of piled-up brushwood and fallen trees, no different, as far as any outward seeming went, from many they had passed before.

"Here we are," said Nat.

Anthony looked in vain for any sign of an entrance, until Nat, getting down from his horse, pushed aside a portion of the brushwood which was held together by twisted grape vines, that appeared to have twined themselves naturally around it. This proved to be a door opening inwards, which, on being entered, disclosed a large open space, formed by the branching of the fallen trees. The light inside, though dim, was sufficient to show that it was in some sort an habitation. The floor, at least, was planked and quite dry, and there was a hole in it that had evidently been used as a fireplace. There was also a rude bed in one corner, planked in, and containing a mattress of coarse sacking, which, far from being as uncomfortable as it looked, was as soft as the softest feather bed, since it was stuffed with the light, downy blossoms of the cat-tail plant.

It was not a cheerful abode. And the boy who a few short hours before had set out on his fine horse, determined to fight his way at all odds to freedom, may have looked round

a little blankly. Not only was he still on the outskirts of Madam's plantation, but he had a sick boy on his hands to nurse and feed and conceal, with the certainty of an abominable punishment for them both, should they be discovered. It was a situation to try the stoutest heart. He had said "Je puis" buoyantly enough last night, but to win through, out of such a perilous situation as this, would require some generalship.

"What do you think on the place?" shivered Nat.

"I have known worse," Anthony told him cheerfully. "And 'tis a rare consolation to know that whatever happens we shall not die of thirst!" He had taken a horse-blanket—belonging to Mr. Slaughter—off the bay mare, and was feeling the bed with business-like hands. "It seems dry enough, Nat," he said, "but we'd best lay this blanket over it to make sure. 'Fore George! 'tis as yielding as down. Sam knew how to make himself easy, it seems. Now get a-bed with you, and I'll have a fire kindled and some corn cakes baked in the drawing of a trigger."

"I ain't agoin' to have you waiting on me," said Nat from his blue lips. "It's agin natur. But if I'm goin' to die you won't need to give yourself no more concern about me, that's one comfort."

"Die, you booby!" laughed Anthony. "You're a long way from that yet." But he wasn't so sure.

"Well, anyways, I'm going to do my share

of the work," persisted Nat, although he could scarcely get the words out at all. "I could fair kill myself when I think of all the moil I'm putting you to."

"You're going to do as I bid you, Nat," Anthony told him. "I'm leader of this expedition and you've got to obey orders. You lie down on that bed," he said authoritatively, and saw that Nat did it.

He then took an alert and eminently practical survey of their quarters. "Sure, we might be worse off, Nat," he said almost gaily. "Sam—and vastly obliging it is in him—has left us some gourds, and, by all that's great! a frying-pan."

For the next two hours Anthony might fairly be said to be busy. He bedded down the horses at the furthest corner of their shelter, bringing them in several armfuls of the reeds that Young Fire had shown a partiality for. He cut down wood, and after infinite persuasion—so damp was it—coaxed it to burn brightly in the rude fireplace. He filled the gourds with water and gave Nat some to drink. The water was of an amber colour and slightly bitter in flavour as a result of its proximity to the juniper bushes, but it was very good. He took Nat's rifle, and going out among the reeds, shot a snipe, and splitting it down the back soon had it broiling over the coals. Then kneading some of his corn into little cakes he wrapped them in leaves in the way he had seen Cynthia do, and baked them in the ashes.

"A feast for a king, Nat," he said, slicing off the most delicately broiled portion of the bird, and passing it in a gourd to the invalid. "And prodigious well broiled, though I do say it. And to think that all this time I've suffered Cynthia to do my cooking through not being sensible what a past master in the art I am myself!"

But Nat could not eat much. He was in all the agonies of rheumatic fever by this time. Suddenly he sat straight up in bed, his eyes delirious. "I can hear the dogs!" he said.

"Fudge!" said Anthony. But going outside he put his ear to the ground and listened intently. He could hear nothing except the tops of the cedar trees rattling in the breeze like bones on a gibbet. Coming back he took off his jacket, and wrapping Nat in it, despite his angry protestations, advised him to try to go to sleep.

"What are you going to do if the dogs do set on us? Shoot 'em?" Nat enquired.

"Not unless I can help it," answered Anthony. But he reloaded Nat's rifle as he spoke and kept it within reach of his hand. Nat watched him in silence.

"I wonder you aren't calling me every name you can lay your tongue to," he burst out at last. "I shall be able to crawl back soon, an' I'll do it, too. I'd rather face Mr. Slaughter than have you put about like this. What do you feel like when you think you've lost your chances of escape through a good-

for-nothing scrub like me?" he demanded, starting up wildly.

"Why, that I'd give them up twice over in exchange for a friend," Anthony told him. He put the boy back with his hand. "I was the same sort of brute that I've ever been to you when I lighted upon you just now, wasn't I, Nat?" he asked. "But that's done with. You're of my company now. And we swim or sink together."

"And arterwards—when we've got clear o' this, if we ever do?" asked Nat, starting up again.

"Didn't you hear me say you were of my company?" asked Anthony. He had got up to put some more wood on the fire, and threw the words at the other over his shoulder.

"I allow I'm ugly enough to stop a clock," Nat admitted, "but you'll never have one as'll serve you more faithful."

"I know that, you idiot!" said Anthony, wrestling with the wet wood's disinclination to burn. "But if you don't lie down I'll come and make you."

"I'm fair full o' thankfulness to you!" said Nat.

"Then cork it up!" Anthony told him, with a threatening step forward which reduced Nat to the recumbent position he had been bidden to assume.

"That's the dogs, sure!" said the sick boy after a minute, and there was no delirium in his eyes now. "I hear 'em baying!"

Anthony again went out and put his ear to

the ground. "Is it them?" asked Nat, rather wildly, when he came back.

"Yes," answered Anthony. "But don't distress yourself, Nat. I'll settle them." He picked up the rifle as he spoke and saw to it that the powder was dry.

Meanwhile, at Pine Mount, an unusual thing had happened. Mr. Fauce had again waited on its mistress, to pay his respects to her. Madam who, of course, knew nothing of the things that made his presence there an insult, received him with courtesy, her hopes in that old scheme of hers beginning to revive.

But Mr. Fauce had a special object in his visit, it seemed. The news that two of Madam's servants had run away in the night had spread over the district, and the master of Green Briars, in the neighbourliness of his heart, had come to offer to organise a party to hunt them down. Madam, as we have said before, was a thrifty person, and had no mind to submit tamely to the loss of her property. But for some reason or other there was a slight hesitation in her acceptance of the proposal.

"Do you propose to use the dogs, sir?" she asked shrinkingly.

"With your permission, Madam," answered Mr. Fauce.

"Miscreants though these runaways are, I would not have the dogs do them an injury, sir," Madam told him.

"I vow no harm shall come to the rascals beyond a shaking, Madam," said Mr. Fauce.

"We'll call the dogs off before they've had time to get their teeth into them."

"Will you yourself, sir, use every endeavour to follow the dogs closely?" solicited Madam.

"Faith, yes, Madam; I'll engage to be in at the death," Mr. Fauce assured her, his smiling eyes on Joyce's.

"At the death, sir?" repeated Madam, paling.

"Nay, 'twas but a figure of speech, Madam," protested the gentleman. "We will return with the rogues tied to our horses' tails, ere evening. And after we've taken them before a justice, and had them branded for you, you'll find them less ready to play such pranks in future. And now if you will permit me to take my leave of you and your fair daughter, I will go to apprise the gentlemen of the neighbourhood and make preparations for the hunt."

An hour afterwards Mr. Fauce came back. Madam's neighbours, it appeared, were delighted to afford her every assistance they could in capturing her runaways, and would meet on her lawn with all despatch. In the meantime would Madam give orders for the dogs to be loosed?

Madam sent for Mr. Slaughter.

"My good friends and neighbours are for aiding us to recover the fugitives, Mr. Slaughter," she informed him. "They will assemble presently on the lawn. Loose the dogs when they appear."

But Mr. Slaughter took the liberty to protest.

"With submission, Madam," he said, "I shouldn't hunt them down with the dogs till you've tried other ways of getting them back first. They're but boys."

"Have you, by any chance, an interest in their not being taken, Mr. Slaughter?" enquired Mr. Fauce with a sneer.

"No, sir," answered Mr. Slaughter, imperturbably, "I haven't. As long as I eat Madam's bread I'll see that she's not done out of her dues. I'll get 'em back for her if I can. But I'd liefer the dogs were kept out of the business."

"You could scarce affront me, Madam, by withholding your sanction now that all the arrangements are made," protested Mr. Fauce haughtily.

"Mamma, I implore you not to have the dogs loosed!" said Joyce, speaking for the first time.

"I' faith, Madam, but convicts would seem to be made mightily much of at Pine Mount!" observed Mr. Fauce.

The gentleman had modulated his voice so nicely that no one could have actually accused him of intending an insult. But Madam looked at Joyce with a sudden dreadful misgiving in her eyes. Joyce met her gaze steadily. But the colour left her cheeks.

"Unloose the dogs, Mr. Slaughter," said Madam, in a voice of ice. Then she turned to Mr. Fauce. "The hunt may proceed, sir!" she told him.

"Madam, I kiss your hand!" returned Mr.

Fauce. "And since your overseer has doubtless many duties to attend to we will excuse his presence at the hunt."

"The gentlemen will not require your services to-day, Mr. Slaughter," said Madam. "You may return to the field."

"I must request that you be pleased to get another overseer, Madam," observed Mr. Slaughter stolidly.

"That I will, sir, and with all speed," Madam answered. "But in the meantime you are still in my service and your duties will take you to the field."

Proud Madam Rolleston received the gentry of the Rappahannoc who presently assembled on her lawn, gay and light-hearted and eager for the proposed sport, with her own incomparable dignity and charm of manner. She preferred to believe that Mr. Fauce had spoken innocently, but his speech nevertheless had left her seriously concerned. It was inconceivable that her daughter's heart could have been affected by a felon servant of her own. Nevertheless, remembering Joyce's steady eyes and paling cheeks, Madam was beset with a thousand fears.

Meanwhile, Nero and Hellion, yelping with fierce excitement, had been released—but by other hands than Mr. Slaughter's—from the iron cage. They were taken to Anthony's and Nat's cabin and given some portions of their bedding to smell. They put their noses to the ground and were soon on the scent, the gentlemen rallying and encouraging them.

The hounds worked the trail down the drive, through the pine-woods, and into the swamp. Here they halted a little confusedly, the water having partly obliterated the scent. But they soon picked it up again, running steadily, where running was possible, swimming where it was not. They made a circle at the spot where Anthony had doubled on Nat and then threaded the trail out again swiftly and remorselessly to the place where their quarry lay hidden.

"Why were they never able to follow Sam up?" enquired Anthony, as the yelping came nearer.

"Sam was acquainted with all sorts o' ways to hinder 'em," answered Nat, deriving some encouragement from the steady front Anthony was keeping. "He didn't never touch the bushes, for one thing; an' for another thing he used to rub his feet with turpentine or onion juice."

Anthony was listening intently. With the scent so warm the yelping had changed to a roar. "The dogs have outdistanced the hunt," he said, and with his rifle in his hand stepped out of the door.

The dogs, as Mr. Slaughter had once predicted, were running for blood. And then, all at once, the object of their search, transforming himself into their old familiar friend, came quietly out to them from the depths of a brushwood pile, with his calm and pleasant voice, his keen blue eyes and his agreeable, "Good dogs, then!"

The dogs stopped, puzzled, bewildered, checked for a moment. "Down!" cried Anthony sternly, and Hellion crouched to his feet

But Nero was made of fiercer stuff. He could not adjust himself to the changed conditions, and with a savage snarl sprang for Anthony's throat. The next instant a clubbed rifle had come down on his head as the switch had been wont to do, but with far deadlier effect.

"Ah, would you!" said a voice, pleasant no longer, but still calm. And a second stunning blow from the rifle in the place where the first one had fallen beat sense and penitence into Nero's head and sent him cowering to Anthony's feet even as Hellion had done. But his submission did not save him, and for half a minute the pitiless punishment still hailed down.

"Heel!" said Anthony coldly, after he had done, and the great beast dropped behind, watching with bloodshot eyes while the hand which had dealt with him so hardly lightly caressed Hellion's head.

Anthony took them into the cabin and introduced Nat to them, making them understand with painful clearness that they had now got to suffer him. And when the hunt swept by their hiding-place, his command of the dogs was such that even in the excitement of hearing it he could still keep them quiet.

But though Hellion was in high favour,

Nero was made to feel himself in deep disgrace. Anthony ordered him to lie at the far end of the apartment, although Hellion, behaving with all the odious airs of a court favourite, remained at his side and was fed with the remains of snipe and ash-cakes. And when Nero could no longer bear it, and thrust himself into their company, he was sent back again, not by the rifle, but by a stern, aloof voice which made him, majestic animal as he was, return to his place like a whipped cur, with his tail between his legs. Hellion slept the sleep of the just, but Nero lay awake for hours, his eyes glooming into the darkness, miserable and unforgiven.

"Nero!" called Anthony at last. And the great hound crawled on his belly towards him, abject penitence in every line of his body, slobbering affection in his eyes. Then Anthony made it up with him. The two watched together through the night, while Nat raved in delirium from the bed. But Nero's eyes no longer gloomed into the darkness, since his gaunt head lay on his master's foot.

The month that followed was a harassing one. Nat needed the most careful nursing, day and night. But the dogs, whose sudden disappearance was a nine days' wonder on the Rappahannoc, were invaluable as protectors, and it was Anthony's practice to leave one with Nat and to take the other out with him when he went in search of food. Mr. Fauce had procured two more dogs, but Nero had

killed one, and Anthony had shot the other, and thrown their bodies into a quagmire before their pursuers could come up. As for the horses, Anthony used to hobble them at night, and turn them loose to graze, though he woke up with an ugly fear at his heart each morning that he might find them mired or strayed. But the reeds and the moss hanging from the trees close at hand seemed to meet all the animals' requirements, and Anthony never found them far away when he went in search of them in order to immure them up in their fastness for the day.

For food they did not do badly, after all. The corn still held out. Very little of it went Anthony's way, although he had to resort to numberless subterfuges to persuade Nat that he was taking his fair share. Bittern and snipe were plentiful. Once Anthony shot a wild cat and found the flesh as sweet and tender as a rabbit's. Once too, by a great piece of good luck, he came across a number of terrapin's eggs. In his joy at the discovery he bent too near to the river, and only missed the snap of an alligator's jaws by an inch. For fruit they had cranberries, and swamp blackberries, and a species of grape, very plentiful in Lone Swamp, called fox-grape, which, though of a musty flavour, Nat used to crave for.

October grew to November, and Nat was on the way to recovery. The nights were becoming frosty, the days more raw and damp than ever. Storms of hail and sleet some-

times beat upon the little shelter. They brought down all the leaves of the forest except the evergreens. The one advantage they had in the lateness of the season was that the rattlesnakes were getting less dangerous, and although Anthony often caught the glint of the wicked eyes that were so near together, they never bit either him or the horses.

The gentlemen of the Rappahannoc were getting a little tired of the amusement with which Mr. Fauce so assiduously provided them. Still, it piqued them that the boys should be able to defy them so long and so successfully, for, from certain signs, they suspected that they were still about the neighbourhood. But Tudor, who had been rusticated for the remainder of the term by the Commissary, for drawing his sword on another student in the College precincts, tried to drown his mortification and real chagrin by joining with zest in the pursuit.

CHAPTER XX

A MUD BATH

The hunt had now become so spasmodic that though it still assembled at fixed times on Madam's lawn, individual members had taken to dropping out and returning home whenever they felt inclined. Thus, when Tudor failed to obey the bugle which at the end of a fruitless afternoon's scouring of the woods called the scattered members of the party together, it was concluded that he had returned earlier in the day, and no anxiety was felt.

But as a matter of fact, the most terrible fate that could befall anyone in that region of swamps, had befallen Tudor. He was a fine rider and knew almost by instinct the moment his horse's feet were leaving firm ground. But in this case there was no transition. With one step the horse was moving through more or less negotiable mud. With the next it was sinking with horrible and inconceivable rapidity into a quagmire. The poor beast realised its desperate plight and plunged, but unfortunately in the wrong direction. Every step it took not only sank it deeper into the bog, but took it further away from solid earth. Tudor tried desperately to turn it, but in vain.

And by this time the horse had taken him too far into the quaking ooze to make any leap for safety possible.

Then he shouted and screamed for help. So frenzied was his voice that in an ordinary place it would have carried for miles. Here, where the trees grew so close as to prevent all vibration in the air, it could only be heard at the distance of a few yards.

Since the hunt had been out that day, boys and horses and dogs had kept closely to cover. There is always something more exhilarating in hunting than in being hunted, and though, inside their fastness, Anthony's iron will had imposed silence on the dogs, his face took on its bitterest look as he heard the shouts and laughter in which the gay gentlemen of the Rappahannoc indulged whilst engaged in the sport of hunting him down.

The afternoon was closing in, and the shouts and laughter had died away in the distance, when the sound of a scream, so awful and prolonged as to chill the marrow in their bones, came out to them. The horses neighed wildly: the dogs would have broken into a howl if Anthony, by hand and eye, had not checked them. Unearthly as the scream had been, no one could doubt that it had come from someone or something in the extremity of agony and terror. No selfish consideration for his own safety could have kept Anthony within doors after hearing it.

He took up a whistle that he had made by removing the pith from a piece of elder-wood,

and the sound of which carried far. "I'll go and range about, Nat," he said. "But I won't take the dogs along with me in case any stragglers from the hunt are still lingering. But if I whistle, send Nero."

The dogs made frantic demonstrations of wishing to accompany him, but the days were long past when they would have dared to disobey the imperative order he gave them to remain where they were. Stepping cautiously out, he closed the door behind him and set out in the direction from which the sound seemed to have come. It had not been repeated, but other cries—human ones—were making themselves heard from the same place.

The heartrending scream that had reached them even in their hiding-place had been given by the poor horse, as the slimy horrors closed over his head. But Tudor's plight was almost as dreadful. Though the sinking was less rapid now, it was still sure. Sometimes a wild hope would arise in his breast that it had ceased, and he would fix his eyes on a particular piece of fringe on his buckskin hunting shirt, only to see it being remorselessly lapped up.

He had shrieked himself hoarse without getting a sound back in reply. The light in the swamp was always ghostly, and the afternoon shades were lengthening. But surely dim and mysterious figures were beginning to collect round him, unless he was going mad?

He was not going mad. These were the

turkey-buzzards and the vultures, beginning to keep their ghastly watch. An eagle with a savage scream circled above his head, and Tudor pointed his rifle at him. Alarmed at the demonstration, the eagle did not attack for the moment, but flew off to firmer ground, the turkey-buzzards and vultures respectfully making way for him. A man who was mired was fair prey. But a man who had managed to keep his rifle high and dry was a different matter altogether. Still, there was no knowing for how long the fierce birds of prey would remain inactive, or if the exasperation of seeing the quagmire claim the whole of the prize would not nerve them to action. And when it came to shooting, Tudor had only one chance. His struggles to turn his horse had jerked his shot-pouch into the slime, which had swallowed it up. The days of the repeating rifle were far distant. With only a single charge in their rifles to stand between them and death from the Indians or wild beasts, no wonder the old backwoodsmen shot straight.

Presently the eagle circled again, and nearer this time, and before Tudor could get in a shot at it, had settled on his back, and was pecking round furiously for his eyes. Shielding the latter with one hand, Tudor beat round at him with his rifle with the other, uttering at the same time piercing calls for help.

There was the ping of a bullet, and the eagle dropped from the finest shot Anthony

had ever made, and which it was a pity Mr. Slaughter was not there to see. The great bird lay on the surface of the morass for a space. Then the greedy green slime sucked down the outstretched wings and lustrous white head, and the turkey-buzzards and vultures were freed from a dreaded master.

"I'm sinking!" shrieked Tudor, as Anthony ran out into the open towards him.

"Be easy! I'll get you out," Anthony called back. "Is your horse under you?"

"Yes," Tudor told him, impatiently.

"Poor beast!" exclaimed Anthony.

"Oh, ay! but bestir yourself!" yelled Tudor.

"If I throw saplings between you and the shore can you get on to them unaided?" asked Anthony.

Tudor wriggled a leg, but found it was stuck too deeply for him to be able to lift it out altogether. "No," he said, "I can't! But be speedier, I tell you! The plaguey stuff has risen half an inch since you've been palavering!"

Without answering, Anthony tore up cedar saplings by the roots, and flung them in the form of a rough bridge between Tudor and himself. Cypress and juniper boughs followed, and such branches of the black gum as his strength enabled him to tear off. On the top of them, working at lightning speed, he cast armful after armful of brushwood. The perspiration was rolling down his face with his efforts.

"Hark ye!" he cried, and his sharp voice of command cut the air. "That bridge is sinking already. I am coming across it to you. I'll drag you out if arms can do it. Then you must race back with me, over it, at full speed. Be ready against I come. Now!"

He was over the bridge in bounds as lithe as those of a mountain cat. He was wrenching at Tudor till his arms were nearly torn from their sockets, and the frail bridge quivered and sank beneath them. He had him out at last with a jerk which narrowly escaped oversetting them both. "For your life!" he cried, and hurried him across the bridge. So close was the margin of time that they had to take the last half dozen steps at a leap.

The whole episode had been so breathless that neither boy had had time to think about their relative positions. They thought about them now, though.

"So it's you, is it?" cried Tudor when he could get his breath. "And pray what have you got to say for yourself?" He examined his rifle, of which he had never left hold, and smiled with satisfaction to find it was still loaded.

"Good breeding might suggest that it would become *you* to do the talking," Anthony told him.

"You mean you desire my acknowledgments for what you did just now?" enquired Tudor, endeavouring to shake some of the

mud from his person. "Well, I freely admit it was nimbly contrived, and I shall take it into consideration when I get you home."

"Your forbearance does you honour!" said Anthony.

"Fetch out the other rascal!" ordered Tudor, with as haughty a mien as an individual weighed down by nearly a ton of swamp mud could assume.

"Ducky, ducky, ducky, come and be killed," called Anthony into the bushes, and quoting an old nursery-rhyme his mother had taught him as a child.

"Fetch him out, I tell you!" Tudor ordered again.

"I'll whistle for him," said Anthony, obligingly, and putting the elder-rod whistle to his lips, blew a shrill call.

Such ready compliance from such a source roused Tudor's suspicions. "In case the rascal has got a rifle too, we won't stay for him," he said with acumen. "You turn your back and march right home in front of me. And please to observe that my rifle will cover you all the way, and that if I see you as much as essay to look round or attempt to reload your own, I'll put a bullet through you!"

"Attempt to reload my own! Why, you're a monster, no less!" said Anthony, staring at him as though he were indeed some strange and loathsome creature of another species.

Tudor went red under the patches of mud his face had acquired. "I told you I intend

to take what you have done for me into consideration when I get you home," he said almost protestingly.

"And I told you your consideration does you honour," said the other. "By the way"—and Anthony drawled the question at him—"did you understand that I meant that it would do no one else honour?"

But this was too much. "March!" ordered Tudor imperiously.

Anthony laughed at him.

"I'll count three," said Tudor in a voice choked with rage, "and then if you don't turn round and obey me I'll shoot you through the head."

"Well, well!" said Anthony, and laughed again.

Tudor raised his rifle to his shoulder. Anthony stood stock still.

"One!" Tudor counted.

Anthony did not move.

"Two!" Tudor's voice sounded a little anxious. "I don't want to do it, you know. Still——"

The next instant a huge body, with hairy paws and flaming eyes and cruelly bared fangs, was on him, and pinning him to the ground.

"Let go, Nero! Let go, when I tell you, sir!" cried the voice that the great hound loved and dreaded more than anything on earth. He loosed his hold reluctantly, snarling and ready to spring again. For a second Tudor was relieved. But glancing up he found



"The next instant a huge body, with hairy paws and flaming eyes, was upon him pinning him to the ground." [p. 328]

the human face above him scarcely less dangerous than the dog's.

He was too dazed by the sudden attack to know for a moment what was happening. But swift as the pounce of an eagle, Anthony had got him by the belt, had flung his rifle to one side, and half bumping him along the ground, half carrying him, had plunged him back again into the morass he had just left.

Tudor struggled like a maniac when he realised what was being done with him, but he might as well have tried to escape from the death-grasp of a bear. Arms like bars of steel pressed him down into the cold slime till nothing except his head and shoulders were above the surface of the quagmire. Then, holding him in a vice-like grasp to prevent his sinking, Anthony threw himself down on the firm earth bordering the morass, and putting a contemptuous hand under Tudor's chin, lay and looked at him.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Tudor, after a silence in which you could have heard an acorn drop.

"Talk to you," said Anthony grimly, and Nero whined a little at a sound in his master's voice which even he, who had had a fair experience of his anger, did not know.

"Five minutes since, you asked me what I had to say for myself," said Anthony. "Now 'tis my turn to ask the question. What do you think of your own behaviour?"

"I vow I wasn't going to fire at you," answered Tudor to a granite face.

Anthony laughed. It wasn't a loud laugh, but a blow could scarcely have been more expressive. "There's no occasion for you to perjure yourself, even though I have put you back into the mud again, like the reptile you are," he said coldly.

"I protest I am not perjuring myself," said Tudor eagerly. "'Twas but to try and daunt you I threatened it. I swear to you on my honour."

"On your *what?*" The bitter question came at Tudor like a stone from a catapult. The hope of the Rollestons gazed up at him helplessly.

"I happen to know what your honour is worth," was the crushing answer to the look. "But because I came at the knowledge through an accident, *my* honour forbids me to discuss it even with you. But leaving these private matters aside, we shall be at no loss for conversation if our discourse is to be of those things in you which make you unfit for the company of gentlemen!"

The contemptuous hand under Tudor's chin tilted it to a higher angle. "In truth you are a pretty fellow—or would be if you were a less muddy one," said the scornful voice. "And you have a fine estate, and servants black and white to do your bidding. To yourself you seem a person of great consequence. But the quality who treat you civilly for your mother's and sister's sake laugh at you for a pert jackanapes behind your back. Even the servants before whom

you strut so big know you in their hearts for the poor, puffed-up thing you are, and hold you in derision. They take lashings or ratings from you with all outward submission, but if I let these waters close above your head there is not one of them who would shed a tear."

"I don't believe you," said Tudor, but looking wretched all the same. "Besides, it's no matter what one's inferiors think of one."

"Your inferiors! They would be hard to find!" was the mordant retort which derived an added sting from the speaker's evident sincerity.

The circumstances of his position prohibited any bodily restiveness on Tudor's part. But it was not the pleasantest thing in the world to have to stand and take a rating such as this without being able to lift a hand.

"'Tis not my practice to talk about myself," the biting young voice went on, "but now that we are conversing here at our ease"—Tudor tried to wriggle away his chin from the contemptuous hand, and had it flicked up more contemptuously still by the other's thumb—"now that we are conversing here at our ease, there is a question I would put to you. Do you dare to pretend that you have not recognised that my condition is that of a gentleman?"

"Of course I have recognised it," said Tudor sullenly. "But you are our servant. A gentleman cannot use a servant like an equal."

"*You* cannot," Anthony agreed. "But be thankful, sir, that there are others whose souls are not small and mean like yours, and who, out of pure nobility of nature, have proved the contrary. Be thankful, sir, I tell you," he repeated sternly, "since I am but a man, and have heavy injuries to pay you home for."

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Tudor again, taking advantage of the momentary softening that had come into the other's manner.

"That I shall have the honour to show you when I am done talking to you," Anthony told him, his eyes inscrutable. "You said, if I mind me rightly, that a gentleman cannot use a servant like an equal. Shall we go into the way in which you have used me? Or shall we let it stand at the fact that because I would not submit to your cowardly affronts you had me—whipped?"

He brought the last word out stilly. But there was a volcano raging under the ice of his manner. Nero whined again, and a deeper chill than any the clammy slimes around him had been able to impart, struck to Tudor's heart.

"I did have the intention, when you said that—that—I hadn't a single generous instinct in me—of letting you off the whipping," the heir of Pine Mount told him, almost shamefacedly.

"You are evidently one of those, sir, who do not wear out their good intentions in practice!" Anthony retorted. "And that

account is still to be settled between us. But to proceed. By an accident, as I have said, I have learnt that of you which, were it known, would make your college spurn you from its doors. I must not speak of it. But may I perhaps counsel that in your next breach of duty you refrain from sheltering behind a woman's petticoats, and exposing one who is all goodness and sensibility to insults and freedoms?"

Tudor looked at him in startled concern. "Do you mean Joyce?" he asked anxiously. "I swear to you I knew naught about it."

"There was no occasion for you to know, since others, happily, have the care for Miss Rolleston's honour that you lack," was the grave reply. "But enough of your sister, sir," he added. "You yourself are still a fertile topic. Do you realise that had that crazy bridge gone over we should both have sunk?"

"That I do!" cried Tudor earnestly; "and mightily grateful I am to you. I told you at the time that I should take it into consideration when I got you back."

"Take it into consideration!" Anthony repeated. The volcano had broken through the ice now, and Tudor gazed appalled at the stormy passion that swept his face. "Take it into consideration!" he repeated. "Does that mean you would have had me less heavily lashed?" Then as Tudor failed to answer, he pressed him relentlessly still further into the mire, till the reeking ooze touched his chin,

and the fear of death spoke in the boy's eyes. "Have a care how you drive me, you insolent cub!" he cried and held Tudor's chin in its foul environment with merciless fingers. "Have done!" he cried again harshly as Tudor tried to speak. "I put you in the mud to listen, not to talk."

Tudor perforce listened.

"I discharged my rifle at an eagle which, but for me, would have pecked out your eyes," Anthony told him. "I hazarded my life for you, like an idiot, by getting you across a bridge about as solid as a house of cards. And, in return, you bid me walk on before you to where you know a shameful punishment awaits me, and threaten if I reload, or try to escape, to put a bullet through me. Out upon you for an unequalled ingrate! The mud that soils my hand as I hold you down does not put the stain on it that does its contact with a thing like you."

"Will you fight me, sir?" asked Tudor desperately. It was his last chance.

Anthony laughed caustically. "An I had not Master Rolleston down in the mire, I doubt I should have to wait a mighty long time before I received a challenge from him," he observed. "But though you do me so great an honour, sir, I fear I must decline it. The only way I fight with puppies such as you, is to lay them across my knee."

The horrors of Tudor's position were getting too much for him. His eye-balls began to start.

"Here, I'll let you up!" said Anthony hastily, and putting out all his strength, drew Tudor closer shorewards. Then with a mighty heave that cracked every joint in his body he freed the imprisoned arms, and bidding Nero assist, drew Tudor on to solid earth once more. "Since for a second time to-day you have taken your worthless life at my hands, we may call our account settled, I think," he said.

"I think we fairly may, sir, but the balance is no longer on your side," said Tudor, and despite the plight he was in there was a touch of real dignity in his voice. Involuntarily he stooped for his rifle, which lay where Anthony had tossed it before immersing him.

But Anthony was beforehand with him, and had it in his hand before Tudor could seize it. "I doubt not but 'twill be safer with me," he explained.

"Nay, I would not have used it," Tudor told him. "And I spoke the truth ere now, when I said my threat to shoot you was but a ruse to get you home."

Anthony shouldered the rifle along with his own, without replying.

A sudden glow came into Tudor's eyes. For the moment he was raised beyond himself. "You prate of generosity, sir," he said, all unconscious of how his manner to this runaway servant of his had changed. "Be generous yourself. Give me the rifle and let me prove my words."

Anthony looked at him for a long time.

"If you weren't such an unconscionable young cub!" he said at last.

"I engage not to use it," said Tudor.

"On your honour?" asked Anthony.

If Tudor's face flushed, the mud adhering to it hid the fact. But one could have sworn that the look he gave Anthony was a grateful one.

"On my honour!" he said.

Anthony put the loaded rifle into his hands.

"Thank you," said Tudor. And without a word more the two boys separated and went their different ways, Anthony not even troubling to make the detour to his fastness which he would have done five minutes before.

Master Rolleston bathed in the first clear stream he came to, and got rid of the mud about his person. On reaching his own plantation he entered a cabin and sent a negro to the Great House for some dry clothes. He was thus enabled to conceal his adventure from his family. But, curiously enough, he also refrained from mentioning the fact that he now knew from personal experience that the fugitives were in the near neighbourhood, a piece of information which would certainly have quickened the search for them.

The next time Mr. Fauce came to Pine Mount he found Tudor not only very lukewarm about a hunt which he was arranging for the next day, but also unaccountably cold towards himself. Anthony had given no names and made no explicit accusations in

his brief reference to the part Joyce had played in getting her brother out of his scrape. Joyce herself had merely told him proudly that Mr. Fauce had given Ephra'm to her, and Tudor, optimistically taking Madam's view that Mr. Fauce would eventually prosper in his suit, had rejoiced at his escape, and considered himself a man of parts to have contrived it. But to-day Mr. Fauce found Tudor looking at him with an odd expression. It was perhaps with some idea of finding out the truth that the boy offered to ride out with him towards Green Briars. But on their way through the plantation one of the white indentured servants craved leave to speak to them. He was the worst character on the place, and in the days before Anthony's arrival had been Nat's chief crony.

"Begging your honour's pardon," he said, "but there's a thought came into my head last night that may perhaps concern you to know."

"And what might it be, Mike?" asked Tudor. He spoke with unusual affability. Perhaps the position in which he had been obliged to listen to certain home truths respecting his behaviour to servants had made them sink in his memory.

"It's queer I didn't think of it before," said the man, "but all at once it came over me last night that, as like as not, them two lads is lying close in Sam's shelter—your Sam, I mean, your honour," he added, turning to Mr. Fauce.

"Sam's shelter? I never heard of the place," answered Mr. Fauce. "Can anyone conduct us thither?"

"I can, your honour," answered the man. "'Tain't far from here."

"I will make it well worth your while, fellow," said Mr. Fauce, and then proceeded to enquire why the information had not been given to him when it was a question of capturing Sam.

"I warn't never shown the crib, not till after Sam had gone," answered Mike. "You can't never get them negroes to tell on one another."

"Well, you shall lead the hunt there tomorrow," said Mr. Fauce. He turned to Tudor, immense satisfaction on his face. "If this fellow's notion is correct we'll soon get your runaways back for you," he declared.

"Yes," said Tudor, but without the enthusiasm Mr. Fauce evidently expected. Somewhat abruptly, too, he said adieu to the gentleman at this point, and turned his horse back homewards.

Mr. Fauce hesitated whether to ride back to Green Briars or on to Williamsburg, in which there were sure to be gay doings this evening, since an English man-of-war, Lieutenant Maynard, commander, had come to anchor in James River. Finally he decided to ride over to Williamsburg.

Tudor waited until Mr. Fauce was well out of sight, and then putting his hands to his mouth in the form of a trumpet, called Mike

back. "Catch hold of my bridle, Mike," he said, "and take me to the place you mentioned."

"Y-e-s, your honour," said Mike. "But wouldn't it be more prudenter to wait till to-morrow for the other gentleman? That Anthony is a monstrous desperate character and would stick at nothin'."

"You take my bridle and do as I tell you," ordered Tudor peremptorily, and Mike perforce did so.

As he had said, the hiding-place was not so very far from the plantation, and they reached it about noon.

"That's it," cried Mike at last, pointing to an innocent patch of brushwood which Tudor would have passed and, indeed, had passed, many times without dreaming that it was other than it seemed. "That's it, sure enough, sir," Mike repeated in answer to his master's surprised look. "It's holler. And there's a door on the north side, too, though you'd never think it."

"Well, now you can get back," said Tudor. "Tell Mr. Slaughter that I had occasion for your services. But if you breathe a word to a living soul about having brought me here, it will be the worse for you."

Mike, though grateful for the permission, hesitated.

"Madam'll make me pay for it, your honour, if any harm chances to you," he said apprehensively.

"Your skin'll pay for it in another minute

if you don't go when I bid you," said Tudor, raising his whip threateningly. Mike went.

After he had departed Tudor fastened his horse to a tree, and stepped cautiously forward towards the brushwood pile. But, light as his footsteps were, the dogs had heard them, and were barking furiously.

"Anthony!" called Tudor.

There was a sharp order to the dogs. Then part of the brushwood seemed to recede, and Anthony stood in the opening, rifle in hand.

"You have no occasion for the rifle. 'Tis but me," said Tudor. "I've come to warn you. Your hiding-place is discovered. The hunt will surround it to-morrow. Mike betrayed you. Mr. Fauce was of my party at the time, or I'd have made the rascal keep his ugly mouth shut."

"Nat should be able to sit a horse again by now," said Anthony, after digesting the information. He smiled at Tudor. "I am very much your debtor, sir," he said.

"Well, that will be a change for us!" said Tudor, half embarrassed, half pleased. Looking across Anthony to the brushwood pile, a boyish curiosity touched his face. "I should like mightily to make an inspection of the place," he said, half shyly.

"Come in, an you will," said Anthony. "But stay a moment till I have made the dogs apprehend that you are a—friend."

"My dogs!" said Tudor, with a rueful grin. Then he gave a swift look up at Anthony to see how he took it.

Anthony laughed. And it was wonderful what a nice laugh he had, when it wasn't the reverse.

The dogs received their orders and the visitor was made free of the place. Nat looked at him in overwhelming embarrassment. He was engaged in cooking a couple of woodcocks which Anthony had raided Madam's woods to obtain, on a spit over a bright fire. The treasured frying-pan lay beneath them and caught their juices, from which he basted them with a gourd. He had stuffed them with cranberries, and the odours that came from them were appetizing to a degree.

Anthony's glance brought Nat to his feet, and he stood up before his young master, gourd in hand. But Tudor's good manners, which seemed, like the aloe, to have blossomed in a single night, were proof against the strain put upon them. Anthony, watching him through half closed eyes, found nothing to object to in the "Hullo, Nat!" that made his greeting.

Anthony did the honours of the place half gaily, half mockingly. More than once he saw Tudor's eyes going to the roasting woodcocks. The tingle in the November air had sharpened his appetite.

"Will it please you to dine with us, sir?" asked Anthony.

"It will please me mightily," Tudor declared.

There have been less gay and agreeable

meals than the one Master Tudor Rolleston partook of with his two runaway servants, despite the limited nature of the table service they were able to offer him. But the fare itself, crisped and browned and cooked to a nicety, more than made up for all short comings in this direction.

"How goes it with Mr. Slaughter?" asked Anthony in the course of the meal.

"He's left us," answered Tudor, shortly.

"Left you!" exclaimed Anthony. It did not seem possible to imagine Pine Mount without the burly overseer. His breeding made it impossible for him to question Tudor further, though he would manifestly have liked to.

"Because Madam—we—put the dogs on you," Tudor told him frankly, answering the unspoken request for information. Considering that Tudor himself had had nothing to do with the proceeding in question, his use of the plural was at least chivalrous.

Anthony moved in his seat a little restlessly. A fugitive flying from justice has not much chance of showing his gratitude. He changed the subject.

"We shall have to set out again on our travels to-night," he told Nat.

"Do you take Nat with you then?" asked Tudor. It was the first hint of friction that had appeared during his visit.

Nat suddenly let the gourd, in which he was helping them to gravy, fall crashing to the ground.

"Any damage done to our crockery I shall stop out of your wages, Nat!" Anthony warned him. Then he looked very straight at Tudor. "Yes, I take Nat," he said.

"And the dogs?" asked Tudor.

"*And* the dogs," answered Anthony.

"Oh, all right," said Tudor, I took his departure quite genially without referring to the subject again.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GENITOES

Towards the late afternoon of the same day the fugitives had saddled their horses and were preparing to turn their backs on the place which had sheltered them for so long, when Anthony heard his name being called in a voice which he knew and which yet sounded strange, so hoarse and strangled it was.

"Anthony!" came again, and vaulting on Young Fire's back, Anthony covered the distance between Tudor and himself in a couple of seconds.

"Yes?" said Anthony, and waited in deadly suspense. He had seen the look in Tudor's eyes.

"It's Joyce!" said Tudor. The muscles of his face had got beyond his control, and though there were no tears in his eyes, his mouth was twitching spasmodically. "It's Joyce!" he repeated: "carried off by the Genitoes as she was riding towards Meherrin. I'm off to the fort to give the alarm, and get the Rangers and Militia on their track. I took this place by the way. Joyce! And those devils!"

It might almost have seemed as if in the extremity of horror and dread that had be-

fallen him he had come to Anthony for such comfort and help as a friend could give him.

Anthony lifted an old face. "Is it certain?" he asked.

"The groom saw one of the brutes pick her up in front of him on his horse. He died after he'd discovered as much to the express who found him trying to crawl towards Pine Mount. The fiends had scalped him and left him for dead."

"Where?" asked Anthony.

"Over against the ancient Indian temple in the woods." Anthony nodded. He knew the place. Tudor went on in jerks. "The Carters have a hunting-lodge—'twixt Pine Mount and Meherrin. Joyce was riding out to visit them. She'd been there often enough before. There was no thought of danger for her, but it seems a band of Genitoes fell on the Meherrin Indians at Fort Christianna this morning. His Excellency had supplied the Meherrins with a good store of arms and ammunition. In consequence the Genitoes were worsted and put to flight. But some stragglers were being headed off Tidewater way. They lighted upon Joyce. They must have doubled back presently, for we found her gauntlet near a quarter of a mile further towards the frontier. She must have dropped it as a token to us. Perchance they are taking her to their hunting grounds beyond the Blue Ridge."

He took the little buckskin glove from his belt, and looked at it almost stupidly.

"Half will suffice to put the dogs on their trail," said Anthony, and ripped the gauntlet in two, keeping possession of one piece and giving Tudor back the other. He whistled to the dogs. "I'll take them over to the temple now," he said, "while you and Nat press forward and rouse the country."

"Aren't I to go with you then?" asked Nat, who had joined them, with a mutinous face.

"No," said Anthony. Then, seeing Nat preparing to defy him, he leant forward and caught at his bridle. "The bay could never keep pace with Young Fire, and you're not over strong yet, Nat," he said. "I know you'd follow me to the death, but if you want to help me, you'll do it in the way I say."

Nat sniffed obedience and Anthony let his bridle swing loose.

"Nat shall not suffer through it," said Tudor, gruffly. "No one shall lift a hand to him for running away. I'll make him my charge."

"That's handsome in you," Anthony told him, "and it was kind in you to come. Good-bye. Good-bye, Nat, old friend," and with a hard hand-grip to them both he was gone.

Young Fire, who had chafed bitterly against the hobbled condition in which for so many weeks now he had been obliged to take the air, delighted in his freedom, and took Anthony along at a fine, swinging trot. The dogs, too, enchanted at the prospect of a run, followed barking at their heels. Soon

it would be their turn to be the leaders.

A red trail by the Indian temple marked the spot where the poor groom had crawled on hands and knees from his place of torment. There the blood lay in a pool, and Anthony's gorge rose, and his soul sickened at the sight. Getting nearer, Anthony found himself among quite a little crowd of people. But he never stayed bridle for that.

Standing beside the temple, but not leaning against it, was a stately, slender figure that he knew. It was Madam. Her arms were hanging at her sides. She was rigidly erect. When they had told her of the capture she had run out like a woman distraught through the woods to the temple. But here, where the murdered man's blood cried up from the ground, and the pathless forest lay between her and the cherished little daughter to whom she had lately been so harsh, and whom fiends were bearing to perhaps wordless torments, Madam Rolleston grew very still. And in the moment when she ceased to run, and moan, and wring her hands, and the frozen silence fell on her, her hair turned to the white of the snows. Many of her servants had followed her, and the kindly, pitying black faces were all around. But none dared speak to her. When they saw her fixed face and whitened hair even their noisy sobbing was hushed. Mammy Chloe sat on the ground at her feet. She was rocking herself and uttering strange words and curses in the African tongue, her eyes like caverns. Sukey, a

vacant look on her face, was picking aimlessly at the scarlet berries of the ginseng, some plants of which grew about the temple. The shock had for the time being deprived the black girl of her reason.

Madam looked at Anthony with unseeing eyes. The negroes made no movement to stop him when he gave Nero and Hellion the glove to smell and waited while they nosed around sniffing the air. The blood excited the dogs terribly and the woods resounded with their savage yelps.

Anthony dismounted from his horse, and leading it by the bridle, advanced towards the stricken mother. "Do not mourn as one who is without hope, Madam," he said very gently. "Many brave men will soon be out ranging the woods to rescue your daughter. My own horse is very fleet. If I can I will bring her back to you."

"God keep you, sir," said Madam, and it was the first articulate speech she had made since they had told her the news. "God keep you, sir," she said, and held out groping hands. Anthony bent before her, and Madam laid them in blessing on the boyish head.

The dogs had broken into their fierce bay-ing call. They were heading straight for the forest. The trail was found. The next minute Anthony and Young Fire were away after them.

Mammy Chloe rose to her feet, shading her eyes with her hand as she looked after them.

"Wake up, Mist'is!" she said, pulling



"She was taken up before one of the Indians." [p. 349.]

Madam's sleeve. "Dat boy dar am sholy de wo'ior on de white hoss, bouten yo' read us in de good Book."

"The warrior on the white horse who goeth forth conquering and to conquer," said Madam like one in a trance. "Who goeth forth conquering and to conquer," she repeated, the life coming into her voice, and suffered them to lead her home.

Had the Indians who bore Joyce with them wished to hide their trail they could have done so in the thousand and one ways their wood-craft taught them. But as all they wanted to do was to get away from the dangerous Tidewater region, and rejoin the flying war-party who were making for their home across the Blue Ridge, after being so unexpectedly and ignominiously defeated by their despised rivals the Meherrins, they took no precautions against being followed.

Joyce had struggled fiercely when they scalped her groom before her eyes, and had beaten the great painted warrior who held her, with hands which made about as much impression on his tough hide as petals would have done. But after the ghastly deed was ended, and the shrieks which would remain as a dreadful memory to her dying day had quivered into silence, she made no further resistance. For greater safety she was taken up before one of the Indians, her own horse being ridden on a lead. She managed to drop her gauntlet in the place where it had been found, but in a little while the Indian,

noticing its disappearance, gave an angry "Ough!" and secured the other one, taking the opportunity at the same time to relieve her of her kerchief and various other small personal possessions which she might have put to the same use.

It was a rough journey. There was no bridge over the Rappahannoc, all communication with the other shore being carried on by means of a ferry. The Indians swam their horses across it, and the skirt of Joyce's habit was wetted through. It was a cold night and she shivered as she sat, but neither swooned nor cried.

The wiry little horses swept them through the vast level of the woods to where the country grew higher and wilder. The moon came out and the magic mountain, round which Joyce had woven so many fairy-tales, was silhouetted against the sky.

They were stopped at last by the precipice—the great precipice that had no name, but that was to acquire one after to-day—that rose up from the dark waters of the creek below to a height of more than a hundred and fifty feet. For nearly an hour they had to ride along the bank, before finding a place where the cliff shelved down sufficiently to allow their horses to land on the other side. Later on, another rider, a rider on a foam-flecked white horse, was stopped by the same frowning elevation and, led by the dogs, had to make the same detour.

In the distance, and almost parallel with

the place where the precipice had first stopped them, the sight of smoke rising in the air told them that their quest was at an end. It marked the spot where the war-party had established themselves earlier in the day to recruit their horses and to encamp for the night. They were too far away from Meherrin by this time to have any fear of pursuit.

Roused by the sentries, fifty tall warriors in all their hideous war-paint rose from their slumber round the fire, to receive the returned stragglers.

Lifting Joyce from the horse, the newcomers took her up to greet their great chief, known as He-Who-is-Looked-Upon, because of his consequence in the tribe and the honour in which he was held.

"We have returned," said the spokesman.

"I rejoice," said the chief.

For fully ten minutes that was the whole extent of the conversation. Not for worlds would either the chief or his warriors have exhibited any womanish curiosity about the manner of their escape or the capture of Joyce.

That premonitory vision of the future which had once made Mammy Chloe shiver and throw her apron over her head, may have shown her Joyce as she was now, standing alone in the moonlight, ringed round with savages, their faces under their greasy black hair painted in stripes of blue and vermillion, their sullen black eyes looking at her with ferocious animosity.

When he conceived the fitting moment had arrived, He-Who-is-Looked-Upon deigned to ask an explanation of her appearance among them.

"Let a council fire be kindled," he said, when the Indians had finished making an end of the account. "And let him who understandeth the language of the pale-faces be ready to make plain to us the answers of the maiden when we shall question her."

His orders were obeyed in gloomy silence, for the hearts of the warriors were black within them with rage and mortification. They were returning with no scalps to hang over the graves of their relatives, and with no tales of victory to make glad the hearts of their women and children. On the contrary, the bones of the bravest of their young men lay uncovered in the woods about Meherrin. And the crowning stroke of their humiliation lay in the fact that defeat had come to them, not from any of the proud tribes belonging to the Six Nations from whom they might have borne it with less disgrace, but from the Meherrin Indians, whom they counted as little better than squaws since they had buried the hatchet with the Chief of the Long Knives, Governor Spotswood, whom they called the Lawgiver, and had made a treaty with him to live peaceably at Meherrin, even carrying their compliance to the extent of allowing their children to attend the school and mission he had set up for them in Christianna. It was the powder and shot

and excellent rifles which this same Lawgiver had presented to his loyal Indian subjects that had brought about the Genitoes' defeat. In consequence, it was the worst moment in the world for any representative of the white race to have come into their hands.

The council fire burned brightly, and the chiefs, and those among the warriors most renowned for courage and wisdom, stalked from their places and ranged themselves round it. The remainder of the band sat still as death. A council fire was a solemn and sacred thing to an Indian. Had any one there present presumed to interrupt those who spoke at it, He-Who-is-Looked-Upon would have sunk his tomahawk in his head and the tribe would have approved of the deed.

The great men sat round the fire for a long time in their usual taciturn silence. Then He-Who-is-Looked-Upon rose to his feet, and wrapping his blanket around him addressed them thus,

"Of a surety this maiden is the daughter of a chief, since she stands before us not like a drooping willow but like the erect pine of the forest. Shall she suffer the fiery torments to avenge the deaths of my young men, whose scalps are now adorning the wigwams of our enemies, or shall we take her under our wing and adopt her? Let my warriors speak, so that He-Who-is-Looked-Upon may learn the wishes of the tribe."

Black Hawk, an old and very famous warrior, accepted the invitation.

"I have seen many winters and much sorrow," he said. "In the days of my fathers the land belonged to the Redskins, from the Mother of Waters to the Great Beyond. When the Long Knives came we treated them with the open hand. We fed them with corn and meat, and our wigwams were ever open to them. And to requite us they have made our rivers run with blood, while the leaves cover the bones of our women and children whom they have slain. Now when we walk on our own land it is like foxes skulking in the bushes: each year we pitch our camp fires further afield. The Lawgiver has offered to make a treaty with us, and his tongue is peace. But clear your eyes from the mists that surround them. There can be no peace between the Long Knives and the Indians while they possess the Indians' lands. The hatchet can never be buried between us. Let us throw it to the sky. Let us not adopt one of the accursed race into our tribe. Let us clear her from our path like a weed."

A deep guttural murmur arose from his listeners. It was clearly one of approbation. Red Fox, a warrior noted for his cunning, spoke next.

"If the maiden is indeed the daughter of a chief her people will follow on her trail to rescue her," he observed. "It may even be that the great Lawgiver himself, he whose hatchet is always sharp, whose feet are like the wings of eagles, and who is wiser than the

beaver, will lead them. The Lawgiver is one who suffers no grass to grow under his feet on the war-path. Therefore if the maiden is to die let her die now, before she can be snatched from our hands."

He-Who-is-Looked-Upon put his forefinger to his ear, a gesture which signified, "I have heard." He then, by a grave nod, signified that Elk's Head, a young but very renowned warrior, who had been waiting longingly to catch his eye, might speak.

Tall and well limbed was Elk's Head, and his deep chest heaved and his fierce eyes flashed as he talked.

"It is as impossible that the Indians should be driven from their lands as that the sun and the moon should cease to shine," he said. "Let us show this Lawgiver, who has dared to penetrate even into the Great Beyond, that we do not fear him. Let the maiden be burnt at the stake, and let us leave her ashes in the path as a sign that the Genitoes will fight the pale-faces till the last drop of their blood has been shed."

No need to ask which way the feelings of his warriors were tending. He-Who-is-Looked-Upon could read that for himself in every savage face.

"Is it the will of the tribe that the maiden dies by fire?" asked the Chief, and hoarse murmurs of assent answered him.

"Let her come and stand before us," said the Chief.

"Little woman of the pale-faces got go

to the council fire," said the interpreter to Joyce, and she moved forward towards the Chief.

She looked very slight and childish, but her gallant carriage was all her own.

"In truth here is one who disdains to cry like a squaw," observed He-Who-is-Looked-Upon, approvingly. "But does the flower of the Yengese think she can hold her head as high when the flames are licking round her?"

The interpreter translated the cruel sentence. And that was the way in which Joyce learnt what fate was in store for her.

The savages waited, with an interest they would not have deigned to show, for her answer.

"I have never had to suffer pain," said Joyce simply. "But if it comes to me now, I hope to bear it not less bravely than a woman may."

"Ough!" grunted the assembly. The speech pleased them.

"Thou art not one who deals in self-praise, daughter," said the chief, "but thou hast the courage of the eagle in thy looks. Thy voice is soft as a singing-bird's, O woman of the murmuring hills, but it does not falter. Therefore, when thou art tied to the stake, He-Who-is-Looked-Upon will with his own hand drive lighted splinters deep into thy body, to give thee an opportunity to prove that thou canst bear pain without a murmur." The interpreter translated the promise.

"God will not let you be so cruel," said Joyce.

"Little woman of the pale-faces say her Great Spirit will put out His arm and prevent you," said the interpreter.

"What sort of a God is thy Great Spirit, daughter?" asked the Chief.

"He is all powerful and very kind," answered Joyce. "He would have none cruel. He cherishes the great chief, and the tiny papoose, and the little running things of the forest. He comforts all who are in trouble."

After the interpreter had made the speech plain to him, He-Who-is-Looked-Upon turned it over in his mind.

"If He wipes the tears from all eyes, there is no need to conciliate Him," he declared at last, with a cunning look. "For from His very goodness He will do us no harm. We will not waste our time then, daughter, in worshipping thy Great Spirit, but will strive to propitiate The One Alone called Kiwassa, who sucks the blood of children, who punishes us with sickness, who stirs up our rivers, and is ever active in thunder and storms. And now, O woman of the rock, the fiery torments are about to begin. He-Who-is-Looked-Upon will keep his word about the splinters, on the honour of a chief." Again the interpreter obligingly reassured Joyce on the point.

"God will send me a deliverer," said the little girl, and with such steady confidence that, in spite of themselves, He-Who-is-Looked-Upon and his warriors glanced round uneasily.

They planted a stake very firmly in the ground. They cut pinewood and placed it in layers around it. They bound their victim's wrists together. They tied her to the stake with a rope long enough to enable her to jump over the fire in her agony, when they would have the satisfaction of pushing her back.

Elk's Head noted the intent, listening look on her face and came over to her, bringing the interpreter with him.

"Thy deliverer will have to come speedily if he is to be in time," he told her. "Pine wood is very resinous." He rolled up her habit from her wrist and pinched a piece of her arm between his finger and thumb. "Thy flesh is white and delicate, maiden," he observed, "but 'twill soon be as dark and charred as a blackened brand."

Joyce struck off the desecrating hand with her own bound ones, a flame of colour in her cheeks.

Elk's Head laughed. "Thy cheeks are like the red sky in the morning, maiden," he said, "and the honeysuckle of the hills is not more fair than thou. Thine eyes are like the pools in the forest. But soon the flames will have devoured thy beauty, and their darting tongues will have sucked the sight from your eyes like the white man's fly sucks the honey from the flowers. Then your high spirit will disappear like a mist, and you will fawn for mercy on the hand you have just struck." The interpreter repeated Elk's Head's amenities in an unmoved monotone.

"I have never had to suffer pain," said Joyce again, "but I do not think any pain could make me stoop as low as that."

The interpreter, who disliked Elk's Head, translated this speech with malicious satisfaction.

"The pale face maiden has a straight tongue. She is not one of those who carry false looks. Had it been the will of the tribe that she should live, she should have been Elk's Head's squaw!" said that warrior.

The ceremonies had now begun. Shrieking and yelling, and brandishing war-clubs and tomahawks, the fifty painted demons began to dance the ghastly scalp dance. Round and round the stake they went, their actions every moment becoming wilder and their cries more savage.

The quiet child tied to the stake was listening always.

"The maiden is as one who sees an open door," said someone, rather awed.

"Had we raised her up amongst us she would have done credit to the tribe," conceded He-Who-is-Looked-Upon. Mindful of his promise to Joyce, he picked up a piece of pine wood and began to whittle splinters about as thick round as a knitting needle, the points of which he sharpened carefully.

"Let the outer layer of faggots be kindled," he ordered and louder and more demoniacal cries than ever greeted the order. The faggots were soon burning and crackling briskly round the stake. They would not

reach Joyce just yet though, since this was to be slow torture.

The flames as they leapt showed that grey eyes had deepened to black in a listening face.

"The maiden is as one who sees visions," said the savage who had spoken before.

Bearing his splinters He-Who-is-Looked-Upon stalked majestically to the stake. Later on, all would be given their turn at sticking in splinters. But precedence belonged to the chief.

The great copper-coloured hands took the sleeve of Joyce's riding-habit, and ripped it down. Then He-Who-is-Looked-Upon lighted one of his splinters in the encircling flames, watched by an attentive and deeply interested audience. Then looking at the rounded arm he had bared, with eyes as fierce as a pigeon-hawk's when it pounces on its prey, he thrust the point of the lighted splinter into the fleshy part of the shoulder and drove it home.

Joyce's face was bloodless with the shock, and she looked at him like a wounded bird. But she did not scream.

"Ough!" grunted the chief approvingly. He-Who-is-Looked-Upon made a true saying when he foretold that here is one who disdains to cry like a squaw. He stooped and lighted another splinter and came back with it. The cruel eyes were considering where to strike.

"Anthony!" called Joyce.

There was a thunder of hoofs and a baying of hounds which the hideous clamour had drowned up till now. There was a crash of horse and rider and hounds through the dancing maniacs to the stake. There was an upward slash of a tomahawk at the cord binding Joyce to the tree. There was a downward slash of the same weapon through He-Who-is-Looked-Upon's greasy locks to his skull, where it was left. There was a swift uptake of Joyce on to the saddle, a ringing call to the dogs, and the cavalcade swept on into the shadows.

The surprise was so sudden and so complete that the Indians were paralyzed. But it was only for a moment. Their great chief lay where he had fallen, and shrieks of execration against the bold rider went up from all sides. He-Who-is-Looked-Upon would give no more commands, but Elk's Head, young as he was, fell naturally into his place. Riding bareback as they did, it took the Indians scarce a minute to leap upon their horses, which were fastened by their bridles to the surrounding trees, and give chase.

Their horses had had a good many hours in which to rest. Young Fire, gallant creature as he was, was jaded and spent. Besides, he had a double load on his back now.

Elk's Head, who was a born general, took in the position in a flash. "Let my brothers divide into two bands," he advised. "Let the one that follows the pale-face chief out-distance him, and drive him into the arms of

the other. Elk's Head with ten warriors will bar his passage to the Great Beyond, and head him towards the precipice. Thus shall we hold him like an animal in a trap. But let not my brothers fire upon him and the lily of the Yengese, for then would they die but one death. When they come again into our hands, they shall die many."

The Indians saw the astuteness of the plan, and separated as Elk's Head had suggested. One of the bands raced like lightning to intercept the flying horse, the other remained stationary, holding the positions Elk's Head had marked out for them.

"I knew you would come, sir," Joyce was repeating, like a comforted child, to her rescuer.

Anthony held her fast, but wasted no words. He drew in the rope with which she had been bound to the tree, and which was trailing several yards behind them, lest it should trip up Young Fire's feet. Then bending as far over the horse's neck as he could, with rallying, praising words, he urged this tried and trusted friend of his forward. Young Fire responded nobly, but the odds against him were too many.

In another moment they saw that they had been intercepted, and that their enemies were swooping down upon them. Without an instant's pause and without a word Anthony wheeled his horse, the dogs turning with him, though unwillingly, since there were redskin throats to fly on in front. A couple of minutes' hard riding brought him

the knowledge that he had been outwitted, and that he was being driven into another demoniacal band, who, with savage yells, had already begun to ride towards him. Anthony turned westwards. Better the untrodden wilds than this. But Elk's Head was too good a tactician not to have realised that such a thought would have occurred to a trapped man. Ten mounted and armed warriors, uttering shrill war-whoops, stood between him and the distant mountains. The only unguarded side was that of the precipice, whose frowning cliff had barred his way in coming.

Anthony could not turn Joyce's face up to his, since between rifle and reins, and Joyce herself, he had no disengaged hand. But his eyes did it for him. "Little dear one," he said, "you will never come into their hands again. Have no fear."

Joyce took the promise with a sigh of content and without question. She did not know that his hand had tightened on his rifle, where his one charge lay.

"Is my jack-knife still in my belt?" he asked her.

Joyce craned round her head. "Yes," she told him.

"Can you get it?" asked Anthony, "or are your hands too tightly bound?"

Joyce's hands were tightly bound enough, but only by the wrist, an arrangement which left her fingers to a certain extent free. By an effort she managed to secure the knife.

Anthony gave a thoughtful appraising glance at the horde of yelling fiends tearing towards him, and closing him in on all sides. It was as though he were calculating to a second how long it would be before they were upon him.

Then he stopped Young Fire dead. Whoops of savage triumph came from the furies around him. So he had realised the hopelessness of his position at last! The dogs stopped, too, yelping fiercely, but looking to their master for guidance.

Anthony cut the cord that held Joyce's wrists together, and when they were free gave her reins and rifle to hold. Then firmly and swiftly he passed the cord round her waist and knotted it with business-like thoroughness round his own, binding her to him. He managed it in the time he had allowed himself in that cool glance of calculation. But the racing Indians could almost have touched him with their hands when he headed Young Fire for the precipice.

"My little brave love," he said to Joyce as he rode, "will you face death with me?"

"Death will be sweet, sir, if we die together," said Joyce.

"For love's sake," said Anthony, and kissed her full upon the lips. "Shut your eyes, my heart," he said again, and in a masterful tenderness his shielding arm pressed the little fair face down upon his breast.

With his left arm circling Joyce, and his

left hand holding the rifle, he gathered up the reins with his right. There was a rousing whistle to the dogs, an affectionate call on Young Fire, and then the white horse and his riders had swept over the precipice into space, the dogs hurtling after them. The next instant they were swimming as lightly and easily through the waters of the creek as though the leap had been one of pure diversion.

"Look up, madam," said Joyce's servant, formally, "you are safe."

From the precipice above there was a strange silence. Not an arrow flew.

Savage as he was, Elk's Head had some noble traits. He could appreciate a gallant deed. "Let my brothers withhold their arrows!" he cried to the warriors. "Elk's Head's heart has swelled high in his bosom at the brave deed that he has seen. The young pale-face is a great chief. Let him go free. And let the place where the big plunge was made be known as Strong Heart's Leap from henceforth."

Unaware of the savages' changed feelings towards him, Anthony, after horse and dogs had gained the opposite bank, was careful to draw Joyce where no arrow flight could reach her before he halted, and cut away the cords that bound them. The pointed splinter still lay in the bared shoulder. "I would suffer the pain for you if I could, madam," said Anthony, and drew it out with steady fingers. Then he turned away his head, because he

could not bear to see the convulsed movement of the little face.

"I will bring you water from the creek, madam," he said, and lifted her down; then, bidding the dogs guard her, he set out on Young Fire, and returned with it in his hat.

When the wound had been duly bathed, Joyce drew the edges of her sleeve together, with a rosy face.

"Sir," she said shyly, "have you perchance such a thing as a pin about you?"

Anthony laughed out. "Nay, madam," he said, "that is woman's gear. But if you will permit me, I will fasten your sleeve together with the sharpened splinter. You may count it your own, since the fiend who used it has had a fair exchange."

"Did you hurt him much, sir?" asked Joyce.

"He got his deserts," answered Anthony grimly. "And now, madam, we must ride again. I do not think the savages will follow us with the long start ahead of them we have gained, and the knowledge they must have that in a little while all Virginia will be out to your rescue. Still, we will take no risks. Will you be pleased to let me mount you?"

"You are changed, sir," said Joyce, wistfully.

"With death before us, I was your lover, madam," said Anthony. "Now I am again your servant."

"And how long will you remain so, sir?" said Joyce, and tried to keep her voice steady.

"Until the day I can claim you mine without dishonour, madam," Anthony told her.

They rode soberly and decorously for many miles. When the sunrise came to melt the hoar-frost, Anthony found they were riding through vast savannahs, which he had not passed in coming, and knew that they had missed the trail. Though they did not know it they had been riding in the direction of Williamsburg.

It was the first day of Indian summer. A lovely haze lay over the land. The air was balmy, the forests were russet and gold. They dined off wild grapes and nuts, and found the world a magic place.

In the early afternoon they saw a company of horsemen advancing over the plain.

"They appear to be the Rangers, madam," said Anthony. "They have doubtless come to your rescue. Your safety is now assured."

"But your own safety, sir?" said Joyce, anxiously.

"That is a small matter, madam, after all that has passed," he answered.

The procession spurring towards them consisted of several companies of Rangers led by Governor Spotswood. The party also included the members of his Excellency's suite, as well as many gentlemen of quality, and several of the young gentlemen of the William and Mary College, among whom you may be sure were young Mr. Beverley and Bob Carter. Mr. Fauce, who had been at Williamsburg when the news of Joyce's capture had reached the capital, was also of the number.

CHAPTER XXII

HIS EXCELLENCY

What a shout the rescue party set up when they saw Joyce! How eagerly they pressed about her, how courtly they all were, how uproarious Bob Carter, how attentive young Mr. Beverley, how gentle and kind his Excellency! For some time Miss Rolleston's groom, who had dismounted and stood holding Young Fire's bridle in his hand, and teaching the dogs how to conduct themselves with his eye, was scarcely noticed.

"Will you be pleased to tell us how you effected your escape, madam?" asked the Governor, when the first clamour of congratulation had subsided.

"I was rescued," answered Joyce, and with a little gesture that was wholly proud and grateful, she turned so that they might see Anthony. "Permit me to present my rescuer to your Excellency," she added steadily.

He was a ragged figure. His mean clothes and the rough blue shirt with which Madam had provided him had not been improved by his six weeks' spell in the swamps; while in the hurry of his departure his jacket had been left behind in Sam's shelter. But there was

that about him, and about Joyce's introduction of him, that made his Excellency uncover, with the same punctilious courtesy he would have used had any other gentleman been presented to him.

A splendid, martial figure was his Excellency, sitting his famous horse, Fearnaught, as though it were a part of himself. His face was young and yet very lined. The eyes were kind. He was ruler and soldier in every inch of him. But he was so much more. He was a man whom all men would have had for a friend could they have chosen.

"Pray, tell us how you were able to handle the affair with such success, sir," said the Governor politely.

"My horse is a fleet one, your Excellency," answered Anthony, "and the Indians were unprepared."

Colonel Alexander Spotswood had ever a passion for horse-flesh, and he eyed Young Fire with appreciative eyes. "'Tis a noble beast," he agreed, "but with a double weight on his back you must have had much ado to outstrip your pursuers."

"May it please your Excellency, we took the straight road," answered Anthony. "The redskins had to make a long detour."

"But the straight road leads over a precipice, sir," said the Governor, who knew that part of the country well, since his expedition last year.

Anthony bowed.

The company was staring at him.

"If we press you too hard with our regards, sir," said the Governor, smiling, "you must remember that your feat is somewhat out of the ordinary. I would know your name."

"I am Madam Rolleston's runaway servant, your Excellency—felon and convict," answered Anthony.

"I did not ask you for your titles, sir," answered Governor Spotswood. "Be pleased to favour me with your name."

Dark eyes looked into blue ones, and Virginia's soldier-governor had not to ask again.

"I am Anthony Shipley, your Excellency, of Whitby Court in Yorkshire," said the boy in the ragged shirt.

Joyce's eyes opened wonderingly; Mr. Fauce's narrowed.

"Are you related to his Grace, the present Duke?" the Governor asked him.

"I am closely related to him, your Excellency," was the answer.

"Then his Grace has a brave kinsman," said Governor Spotswood. "To-morrow you and I must have our reckoning, Mr. Shipley. Till then, will you honour me by being my guest? You will not need to be told that your parole not to escape is included in your acceptance of my invitation?"

"I am obliged to your Excellency. And I give you my parole," answered Anthony bowing.

"Gentlemen, permit me to present to you Mr. Anthony Shipley, of Whitby Court, in

Yorkshire—my guest,” said Governor Spotswood.

The gentlemen bowed low. There were no manners like those of old Virginia, and among those attending his Excellency to-day were the flowers of the stock. That charming, elegant gentleman with a face of wonderful personal beauty, and an enchanting smile, was Colonel Byrd of Westover, the Governor's chiefest friend. He was the father of our little Evelyn, and the most polished gentleman of his time. Riding beside him was the sturdy Commissary, who had thrown down the pen now that there was a man's work to be done in the open. And many young sparks were in his Excellency's train, too, daring and intrepid young gentlemen, who cut a dashing figure in their fringed hunting shirts and coon skin caps, with the tail hanging rakishly behind. Here were representatives of the Randolphs, and the Careys, the Ludwells, the Lees, the Blands, and the Harrisons, Virginia's proudest families. Very much at Miss Rolleston's service were all these young gentlemen. And in her bedraggled habit, with its torn sleeve skewered up with a pine-wood splinter, Joyce stood amongst them, her pretty dignity unruffled, a veritable little queen.

“And now, sirs, since our quest is ended, and I have affairs of moment to discuss with Lieutenant Maynard, what say you to returning home?” said the Governor. “The Genitoes shall have their lesson, be sure,

but at a more seasonable opportunity. Will you honour me with your presence at supper this evening, gentlemen, to meet Lieutenant Maynard, and to celebrate the happy occasion of Miss Rolleston's rescue?" His bow included Anthony among the rest.

"It would have been a happiness for me, your Excellency," said Anthony, after the others had accepted, "had not the garments I stand up in made the extent of my wardrobe."

"That can easily be accommodated," answered the Governor, smiling. "No doubt some of the younger gentlemen of my suite——"

The younger gentlemen of the Governor's suite were eager to put their best at Anthony's disposal. His Excellency was of those who have only to hint a wish.

"Methinks, sir," said young Mr. Ludwell, one of the Governor's aides, "that we are of the same height. I have a pearl-coloured satin that would suit you to admiration, if you will honour me by accepting it."

The pearl-coloured satin put the climax to Mr. Fauce's jealous rage. His narrowed eyes were venomous. "Perhaps your Excellency has not apprehended that this fellow, besides being a runaway, is a felon," he observed.

Governor Spotswood looked down at the speaker. Mr. Fauce was as tall as his Excellency when it came to inches, but that was the effect his look had upon the spectators. "Heaven has not failed to endow me with

the faculty of hearing, sir," he answered. "I think we could scarce any of us have missed Mr. Shipley's, shall we say *humble*?"—Colonel Alexander Spotswood smiled satirically upon the word—"announcement of the fact."

Mr. Fauce was not accustomed to be spoken to in this way. It fired his temper. "Your Excellency has honoured me with an invitation," he said, "but, with submission, I cannot sup with a felon convict."

The Governor of Virginia stayed his horse, and the company obediently followed suit. "Have you forgot to be a gentleman, Mr. Fauce?" he asked.

Before a rebuke so public and stinging as this, Mr. Fauce was dumb. He flushed under the Governor's quiet gaze. "No, may it please your Excellency," he stammered, at last.

"Then I need not remind you what courtesy is due to my guests?" enquired the Governor.

The Governor of Virginia, the friend of kings and princes, the adored of his own subjects, had no need to remind the gentleman, whom he had thus humbled before the proudest in the land, of any elementary tenets of good breeding, or of the respect due to his own high position, since Mr. Fauce murmured, "No, your Excellency," and bowed low to hide his shame.

"Then I may conclude that I shall have the pleasure of welcoming you at my board to-night?" asked the Governor, courteously.

"Whatever your Excellency pleases," answered the crestfallen gentleman.

The company rode past the savannahs and into the woods again. Then the crows began to fly over their heads, and in the distance cattle began to low, and dogs to bark, and the roofs of Williamsburg were seen.

On reaching the town, doors and windows were flung open, and many a loyal huzzah went up as the Governor, riding with Joyce, and followed by his gay cavaliers, and the companies of Rangers, swept by. They passed the Capitol, that noble and commodious pile in which the council and the grand assembly of burgesses, the Virginian Parliament, had its sittings. They went up the principal street, more than a mile in length, at the end of which was the monastic-like building of the William and Mary. They skirted Gloucester Street, where was the famous Raleigh Tavern with its bust of Sir Walter Raleigh over the doorway, in the Apollo room, in which the beaux and belles of old Virginia had danced to many a stately measure. They passed Bruton church, and the market-place, and the new play-house, and saw in the distance the octagon powder magazine which his Excellency had built the year before, and then turning up Palace Street saw before them the gates of the palace, where the guard came out to receive them.

Here the Rangers and their officers departed, as did many of the gentlemen. Here,

too, the Commissary remorselessly collected his flock and sent them back to their books.

"I'm mighty glad you're safe, Joyce," observed Bob Carter, as he said good-bye, "but I wish it had been me that had tomahawked that Indian!"

Perhaps young Mr. Beverley wished the same thing. At any rate, both boys returned to the college rather soberly. Joyce's frank and joyous pleasure at the sight of them had filled their companions with envy. But while Bob did not know why he would have had her different, Mr. Beverley did. A foreshadowing of the pain of "those who go through life lonely" which Nance had foretold, laid its dead clutch upon his heart. Careless Bob had never given Nance's words a second thought. But if the old fortune-teller had smiled rather sadly when she had heard him offering to share the coon hunts that were to make his life with Joyce, she would have smiled more sadly now.

The Governor and his party had still to ride through lordly pleasure-grounds and orchards, of more than four hundred acres in extent, before they reached the palace, whose great cupola on birthday nights illuminated the whole town. Dismounting, they threw the bridles of their horses to the waiting grooms, while the palace servants, in their gold and scarlet livery, flung open the doors. Here the Governor put Joyce in charge of his housekeeper, and arranged for an express to be sent instantly to Pine Mount to

acquaint Madam with the good news. Then he turned to Anthony.

"We sup at eight, Mr. Shipley," he said very courteously. "I should counsel sleep until it is time to dress. I will give commands that you are not to be disturbed, and will send my own servant to you at the proper time. Your horse shall have the care he deserves. As to your toilette, have no fear. Since Mr. Ludwell has undertaken the charge of it, you may take my word for it you are in good hands," he added, in a way that made his young aide laugh and flush.

Anthony, keeping a hand on Nero and Hellion, looked up at the Governor frankly. "I am sensible that they are not house-dogs, your Excellency," he said. "But I doubt your grooms would find them hard to control did you relegate them to the stables. Besides, I fear they would pine if separated from me, and I owe them much to-day."

"Take your dogs to your room, by all means, Mr. Shipley," said his Excellency, with his kind smile. But he noticed how the fierce creatures, fighting with each other for a place at Anthony's side, crept meekly enough to heel at his sharp order. Colonel Alexander Spotswood drew some pregnant conclusions from what he saw. Anthony was to have the benefit of them on the morrow.

The bedroom to which Anthony was conducted was a luxurious one. Costly rugs covered the polished floor, while oaken clothes-presses and cases of drawers surmounted by

looking-glasses were evidently designed for the accommodation of wardrobes of less scanty dimensions than his own. But, in rags though he was, Governor Spotswood's guest was waited upon as though he had been a prince. The logs were lighted on the open hearth for him: obsequious hands poured out scented water into the shining pewter basin: soups and wines and chicken-meat were set before him. And when he had laved himself and partaken of the delicate fare the counterpane of purple and golden tissue was turned down from the great four-poster and a brass warming pan run over the linen sheets. And in this luxurious nest, piled high with mattress and pillow and bolster of the softest, the boy who for the last six weeks had lain on the floor of Nat's shelter, slept the sleep of physical exhaustion, while Nero and Hellion kept faithful watch beside him.

The pearl-coloured suit arrived with Mr. Ludwell's compliments, and with all its accessories of ruffled shirt, buckled shoes, and costly handkerchief. The Governor sent Hannibal, his own body servant, and when the sumptuous finery had been donned, and the fair hair dressed and tied with a broad black ribbon that Mr. Ludwell had sent for the purpose, old Hannibal clasped his hands in fervent admiration of his own achievements.

"But 'taint only de 'dornment," he was good enough to add. "'Pears like young massa got a way wid him."

A message was brought to Anthony from the Governor. Would Mr. Shipley be pleased to wait upon his Excellency in the privacy of his study before being ushered into the great state drawing-room, where Lieutenant Maynard and the other officers from the English man-of-war were to be received? Mr. Shipley was graciously pleased to accede to the request, and bowing lacqueys escorted him down.

The Governor, in his full court dress of crimson velvet, still looked the soldier he was. But his cravat was tied with a fastidious nicety, and a touch of indefinable individuality marked his wearing of the garb.

What old Hannibal called having "a way wid him" Governor Spotswood called distinction. It was a quality no one could have denied to the young gentleman in the pearl-coloured suit, with his handsome figure and well-cut face and eyes of sapphire blue, who now appeared before him.

"With submission to Mr. Ludwell, there is an addition to your toilet I could suggest, sir," said the Governor, and put a sword into his hands.

The colour leapt into Anthony's cheeks. His hand clasped and closed in loving fondness round the hilt.

The Governor took it from him for a moment, and bent the tempered steel into a circle. Releasing it, the blade flew back straight and true.

"'Tis a Toledo," said his Excellency, and

watched the boy's eyes glow. "You will honour me by accepting it from me as a gift, Mr. Shipley," he added gently.

"What can I say, your Excellency?" asked Anthony, and there was a tremor in his voice that few people had ever heard there.

"Nay, your eyes say all that is needful," answered his Excellency smiling. "But I must not keep my company waiting. We will go together, Mr. Shipley."

Perhaps it was not accident that made Governor Spotswood enter the state drawing-room with a hand resting lightly on Anthony's shoulder. As his Excellency's guest, the gentlemen present would have treated Madam Rolleston's servant with every civility. But a warmer friendliness may perhaps have coloured their manner after they had seen the Governor show him such a particular mark of favour.

Lieutenant Maynard, a fine specimen of an English sailor, and his officers were announced, and the company went down to the supper-room.

Since the Governor at this time was unmarried, and since this was only a dinner for men, Joyce was not present. As a matter of fact, she was in bed, being cosseted with drops and cordials, and having her temples rubbed with Hungary water by the kind house-keeper. But she was the toast of the evening, you may be sure. And when he heard her named as the fairest maid in all Virginia, and praised on all sides, Mr. Fauce became

more and more incensed with the way the world was serving his enemies. He fancied, too, that he could detect a certain coldness in the company's manner to himself since the Governor's rebuke.

Anthony, on the contrary, was made much of by the Governor's young aides, Mr. Ludwell and Mr. Randolph, who presented him to their friends. He had no reason to complain of his entertainment.

All the state rooms were thrown open to-night, and after the supper was ended, the guests wandered about them at will. Mr. Ludwell took Anthony to see the cannon ball which had torn Governor Spotswood's coat at Blenheim, when he was aide to the Duke of Marlborough, and which his Excellency kept as a curiosity. Mr. Fauce was sitting talking to one of the English officers in an alcove in the same apartment. He did not hear them enter, and the big cabinet in which the cannon ball was kept hid them from view. But his own and the Englishman's conversation came out to them with startling distinctness.

"If Miss Rolleston is the toast they say she is, I would give much to make her acquaintance," said the Englishman.

"In that case you would make it easily, sir," answered Mr. Fauce with a sneering laugh, "since Miss Rolleston is one whose favours can be bought. I myself have offered her gifts to the value of over forty guineas, and have not found her averse to accepting

them. Nor is the lady a prude neither. I have here a letter writ in her own hand in which she begs me to meet her secretly in the woods. You can read it, an you will."

Taking out his letter-case, Mr. Fauce abstracted a note Anthony had seen before, and offered it to his companion.

"Nay, I am not one to read a lady's private correspondence," said the Englishman, drawing back.

Anthony walked round the cabinet. Mr. Ludwell followed him.

"You lie, sir!" said Anthony to Mr. Fauce, "and since 'tis a moonlight night, shall our meeting be now?" Mr. Fauce started violently. In the anger and mortification that consumed him he had raised his voice unconsciously. It was no part of his plan to be overheard. He had kept Joyce's letter with some vague idea of using it as a last means of coercing her into marrying him, by threatening to make its contents public. But to-day his last shred of hope in that direction had been torn away. That look in Joyce's eyes that was wholly proud and grateful for the ragged convict: that serene presentment of him to the Governor of Virginia left Mr. Fauce in no doubt as to her feelings towards him. But though the letter could no longer serve his cause with Joyce it afforded him a weapon with which to wound and humiliate her. All the same he had not intended to work in the open. His purpose had been to

set the ball of calumny against the little girl rolling, and then, if directly questioned on the subject, to offer the faint denials to all the charges against her which, while redounding to his own credit as a gentleman where a lady's good name was concerned, would but serve to impress the enquirers with their truth. Anthony's prompt action had over-set all such schemes. Young Mr. Ludwell's presence complicated matters too. And from the way in which the latter and the Englishman were looking at him he gathered the uncomplimentary nature of their thoughts about himself. All the same, he tried to carry matters off with a high hand.

"If you want another whipping, I will order my servants to chastise you, you insolent rogue," he observed, "but I do not fight with convicts."

"Yet I think you must fight with the Governor's guest, sir," observed young Mr. Ludwell, sweetly.

Mr. Fauce heard him with baffled discomfiture. "For a gentleman to fight with a convict, 'tis monstrous!" he exclaimed.

"'Twould be more monstrous still, sir, if one whom Governor Spotswood has deemed worthy of his table is thought unworthy of Mr. Fauce's sword," returned young Mr. Ludwell. The idea appeared to afford him amusement. "I fear me, too, that the unjust things the gentlemen of Virginia will say about your courage, should you fail to call Mr. Shipley to account for the limpid plain-

ness of his speech, would also be monstrous!" added the young gentleman, sympathetically.

Mr. Fauce still hesitated. "What is the lady to you, fellow, that you take upon yourself to fight for her?" he demanded of Anthony, and the insult in his voice was to the absent Joyce.

"She is my kinswoman," answered Anthony, proudly. "But we fight about no lady, sir. Miss Rolleston's name must not be suffered to come into the business. We fight upon a private matter of our own—say, because I happen to find your eyes as near together as snapping turtle's, which is a reptile I cannot abide."

"If I do fight you, I will run you through," said Mr. Fauce, almost choked with rage, and left the room to find a second from among the gentlemen of his acquaintance present that evening.

"That snapping turtle touch brought it off!" said young Mr. Ludwell, with an engaging joy. "I shall be happy to offer you my services as your second, sir," he added, with a bow.

"I have much to be obliged to you for, sir," said Anthony.

"You have indeed, Mr. Shipley," agreed young Mr. Ludwell, "for the thought of how rude his Excellency is like to be to me, should he hear of my part in the undertaking, positively racks me. And yet 'tis a sweet night, and the bowling alley a sylvan and convenient spot."

Mr. Fauce's second, to that gentleman's disgust, agreed with Mr. Ludwell that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, no course was left open to a man of honour but to accept Mr. Shipley's challenge. He agreed, too, that the bowling alley was as good a place for the encounter as could be found, though he did not wax as enthusiastic over its charms as did the volatile Mr. Ludwell. The four gentlemen wended their way to it with the utmost secrecy.

The moonlight of this Indian summer night was almost as bright as day. The oak-trees surrounding the bowling-alley stood clear against the sky, while a couple of rabbits sported amongst the shadows their leafless boughs cast upon the smooth turf. From the distance came the plaintive call of a partridge for her lost mate.

Quickly and silently the seconds marked the standing-spots of each combatant, and measured the swords, while the gentlemen doffed their coats, fighting in their ruffled shirts. As they took their places, Anthony made the usual courtly salutation to his antagonist, a ceremony which Mr. Fauce pointedly neglected.

"Commence!" came the order, and the two gentlemen were promptly engaged.

Mr. Fauce, like every other Virginian of quality, was an expert swordsman. Anthony was an unknown quantity. In consequence, the seconds watched in breathless interest.

It was a one-sided beginning. Mr. Fauce's

blade had flashed half-a-dozen lightning thrusts in as many seconds, which Anthony parried without attempting to return.

An involuntary sigh of disappointment came from Mr. Ludwell. He had expected something more exciting. Mr. Fauce's second, who was more experienced, found it quite as exciting as he could have hoped.

Then Mr. Fauce lunged more fiercely, since here it seemed was an antagonist of little spirit. But the bowling alley was slippery, and in the act of giving a furious thrust, his foot slipped. His effort to recover himself sent his sword spinning out of his hands on to the grass.

Anthony instantly lowered the point of his own weapon. "Pray resume possession of your sword, sir," he said courteously, which Mr. Fauce did, and without having the grace to make any acknowledgment of the other's magnanimity.

Young Mr. Ludwell no longer sighed. It had begun to dawn on him, just as it had on Mr. Fauce himself, that though Anthony merely stood upon the defensive, he was doing it in a particularly finished way. Though Mr. Fauce's blade darted forked lightning, never once did it touch anything but steel.

Mr. Fauce knew a *coup de maître* that had been taught him by a famous master, under promise of utmost secrecy. He used it now, but, to his mortification, his antagonist not only parried it with ease, but obviously refrained from taking advantage of an opening

for attack which the stroke had given him. That so fine a swordsman as this should be so long in coming to the attack, filled Mr. Ludwell with astonishment. But what Mr. Fauce's second said to himself was,

"He has set out to disarm his enemy, and with so skilful an opponent 'tis a bold game."

Even as he said it, Anthony's blade flashed and Mr. Fauce's sword, struck from his hand, lay on the ground between them. Anthony put his foot on it. Then with the point of his own sword at his antagonist's breast, he said,

"Your life is in my hands, sir. If I spare it, it shall be on my own conditions. One is that you give up to me a letter now in your possession. The other is that you acknowledge before these gentlemen that in the matter touching which we have fought, you lied!"

"And if I refuse?" asked Mr. Fauce, his voice thick.

"Then I will rid the world of you," answered Anthony.

There was an awed silence in the moonlight. Anthony's tone was quiet, but neither Mr. Fauce nor the listening gentlemen doubted for a moment that he meant what he said.

"The letter is in the pocket of my coat," said Mr. Fauce at last.

"Will you, if you please, have the complaisance to hand his coat to Mr. Fauce?"

asked Anthony courteously to Mr. Fauce's second, still holding Mr. Fauce himself by the point of his sword.

Mr. Fauce's second interrogated his principal with his eyes. Then he fetched the coat and handed it over to its owner.

"The letter, sir!" said Anthony.

With fumbling fingers Mr. Fauce selected the hasty, childish scrawl that had been made so base a use of, and put it into Anthony's hand. The latter tore and re-tore it and threw the pieces from him to the sward.

He took his sword from Mr. Fauce's breast, and lowered it till its point touched the ground. He stooped, and taking his foot from Mr. Fauce's sword, handed it to that gentleman. He was quite defenceless. "There is still something to be said, sir," he reminded the shamed gentleman, gravely; "it would become you if you said it freely."

Mr. Fauce held the sword Anthony had restored to him for a moment uncertainly with his fingers. "I lied—foully," he said, and with the bow to his antagonist that he had omitted at the beginning of the encounter, walked away.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RECKONING

The pearl-coloured suit was of yesterday. When Anthony woke in the morning, it was to see Hannibal, almost weeping with mortification, trying to patch up a rent in his faded blue shirt. The old man had already brushed out as much swamp mud as he could from the nether garments which completed the costume, without noticeably improving their appearance.

"Massa Ludwell done sond yo' a suit ob buckskins, sah, lak he wear his sef. But his 'Cellency he gib his orders dat yo' is to wear dese yer 'diculous, no kin' o' clothes, dat a quality pusson lak young Massa oughtenter lay hold of wid a ten-foot pole. I argued wid his 'Cellency 'bout it, but dat w'ant no use. I forced fotch 'em yo', sah!" and Hannibal held out the disreputable garments deprecatingly.

Anthony accepted them "quiet lak," as Hannibal said in describing the scene afterwards. It was an ominous opening to his day. His Excellency, he was told, would send one of his aides to fetch him when he was ready to receive him.

The aide was young Mr. Ludwell. He

was too well-bred to refer to Anthony's rags, but he looked at him with a pitying eye. From his own personal experience he could sympathise with what seemed to lie in wait for the other. He adored the Governor. But there are disadvantages in living under the eye of one's idol, when the latter is the Tubal Cain of Virginia.

The Governor was dictating a letter to his secretary as Anthony entered. When it was finished he dismissed him. Anthony and he were left alone.

"And now, Mr. Shipley!" said his Excellency. His voice was short and resolute—the voice of the soldier who gives commands and has no need to repeat them. This was not the friend who yesterday had treated Anthony as an honoured guest, who had given him a sword of finest Toledo steel, who had entered his state-room with his hand on his shoulder. This was the representative of his Majesty in his dominions across the sea, before whom wrongdoers quaked.

"Why are you in Virginia as a felon, sir?" asked the Governor, brusquely.

"Because I am a Jacobite, your Excellency," Anthony told him.

"I have had you here to inform myself of the details of your case, sir," the Governor reminded him.

"Two years ago, your Excellency," said Anthony, "I writ a letter in answer to one from Lord Derwentwater to me, which implicated me in his and the Earl of Mar's

rising. When Lord Derwentwater was beheaded on Tower Hill"—the Governor nodded—"my letter fell into the hands of the Jesuits. A year afterwards they discovered it to my kinsman, the Duke. He had conceived a hatred for me since the day when his son and my close friend, the poor young Earl of Forres, was maimed in the hunting field. His Grace's hopes and ambitions are all knit up in his son—who is indeed a gallant lad, your Excellency—and he cannot support the thought that should his son expire of his injuries, which God forbid! the title would devolve on me. Besides which, he is a rigid Papist, while I am Protestant. The Jesuits who are ever about him and who dread a Protestant successor to the dukedom, made it their care to get me executed for a traitor. However, his Majesty"—Anthony's tongue might have been dipped in gall—"was graciously pleased to commute my sentence into one of transportation."

"His Majesty cannot have known the circumstances, sure, or he would have taken your extreme youth into his princely consideration," said the Governor, almost to himself. "Why did you not reveal your identity to your kinsfolk the Rollestons?" he demanded of the boy.

"At first, your Excellency, seeing I was but a ragged convict, I was too proud to thrust the fact that I was nearly related to them, by their mother, upon their notice," answered Anthony.

"And afterwards?" asked the Governor.

The memory of past happenings made sombre shadows in Anthony's eyes. "I shall be greatly obliged to your Excellency if you will not press the point," he said, "since those of whom we speak are of my own race."

The Governor inclined his head. "'Tis an ill bird that fouls his own nest, Mr. Shipley," he agreed, "and I respect your reticence." He leaned a little forward. His dark eyes looked Anthony through. Had Mr. Ludwell been present, his forebodings that the Governor was going to be "rude" would have been strengthened.

"You spoke bitterly when you referred to your transportation, sir," he said, "and no doubt you consider yourself hardly used. Is this the case?"

"I scarce think his Majesty has erred on the side of indulgence, your Excellency," answered Anthony.

"How old are you, Mr. Shipley?" asked the Governor, considering him.

"I have eighteen years, your Excellency," Anthony told him.

"In fine, then, you were but sixteen when you writ that letter?" the Governor enquired.

"That is so, your Excellency," Anthony answered.

"At sixteen years of age, Mr. Shipley, you should have been disporting yourself on the playing-fields of Eton—as no doubt you were," said the Governor. "You should also have been kept in good order and discipline by

ushers—as assuredly you were not. Had I a son who at that tender age had presumed to set himself forward to disturb the government of his country, know you what I should have done to him? To be plain with you, sir, I should have birched him,” said Governor Spotswood.

He watched the colour flame into the proud face, watched the head lift royally, watched the blue eyes flash. Then he resumed his theme.

“I should have birched him, sir, and well would he have deserved it,” said the Tubal Cain of Virginia. “The thrones of princes are not to be over-set by beardless boys. Suppose your mad rising had succeeded, have you thought of the throes of civil war it would have brought upon the land? England has had enough of such horrors. While George, by the grace of God, is king, his subjects have peace. And that is what the true interests of your country demand.

“Those who break the law must suffer the law’s punishment,” continued he whom the Indians called the Lawgiver. “Did you know that when you broke the law of England by conspiring against his Majesty, the penalty of failure was death or transportation?”

“Yes, your Excellency,” answered Anthony.

“Then have the courage to play out your part to the end, sir,” said the Governor. “Stand to the hazard of the die. Accept your losses as you would have taken your

gains. And do not try to evade your punishment by running away from it."

"If your Excellency but knew——" began Anthony and stopped on the word.

"If I knew how hard the punishment is, you mean?" asked the Governor. The lined face of the man of the world, who read men as though they were books, dwelt thoughtfully on the boy. Then—"Will you set the windows wide, if you please, Mr. Shipley?" he said.

Anthony did as he was desired. They were French windows opening on to lawns. In the distance were the woods—the woods through which lay freedom. There was a restless look in the boy's eyes which the Governor noticed, when he came back and stood before him.

"I have endeavoured to make you sensible of that in which I consider you to have failed, Mr. Shipley," he said. "You have broken the law of England and have been transported hither. You have broken the law of Virginia by endeavouring to escape before the full time of your service has been completed. I now offer you a free choice. You may either submit yourself to me as head of this Government wherewith his Majesty hath been pleased to entrust me, to accept in due and ready obedience from my hands such punishment as I shall deem fitting—or you may escape by that window. Your horse is in the stable. You have but to mount him. Your dogs are in your room. You have but

to whistle them. There is a rifle hanging on yonder wall. You are free to take it. Believe me, I shall not give the alarm."

Anthony's face grew tense. Colonel Alexander Spotswood, his eyes kind, for all their sternness, watched in silence the battle he was fighting with himself.

"Will the punishment be one that a man of honour may tamely bear, your Excellency?" he asked at last, with a haggard look.

"Nay, I have given you your black draught to take or to leave, Mr. Shipley," the Governor told him. "I shall offer you no sugar-plums to make it go down the more easily. Suffice it for you to know that you will be dealt with at my pleasure."

From outside came the brave sounds of the outdoor world and the clarion call to freedom. Inside, the room still echoed with the words of one who in plain terms had shown him where his duty lay.

The Governor spoke again. "Submission to those in just authority is the lesson every soldier has to learn, Mr. Shipley," he said. "I'll be bound you've taught it to others!" he added with the excellent sense which always marked his utterances. "Now see if you are strong enough to learn it yourself. If you master it, whichever Prince you elect to follow, when a beard has given you the right to choose, will find you fitter for his service."

The pine woods in the summer heats were not more still than the room, while Anthony

learnt the hardest lesson in the world. "I submit, your Excellency," he said at last.

"Then, Mr. Shipley," said the Governor, "our will and pleasure is that in reparation for your fault you serve under Lieutenant Maynard in the expedition he is manning against Blackbeard."

He smiled at the effect his words had on the young face before him.

"If you die, you die as a brave man, Mr. Shipley," said Colonel Alexander Spotswood. "If you live, you will have rendered yourself a fit object for the King's grace and favour, and I engage to obtain your pardon from his Majesty."

A proud knee stooped, and eager, boyish lips kissed the Governor's hand. "I have no words in which to thank your Excellency," said Anthony.

The Governor looked at him with kind eyes. "You are to join Lieutenant Maynard at once, Mr. Shipley," he said. "He knows that I am sending him an officer on whose loyalty, courage and conduct I can rely. And since I took the liberty of anticipating what decision you would come to, I have had a valise packed for you with linen and other necessities. You will find a suit of buckskins in your room, too, that I hope will be to your liking, while if you want to do Hannibal a kindness you will suffer him to burn your present garb. During your absence your horse shall be well tended. As for your dogs, I have a guest in the house

who, I doubt not, will undertake their charge."

Anthony looked up swiftly.

"No," said his Excellency; "there are to be no good-byes. But if you return, bringing your sheaves with you, you will find me serviceable to your suit."

CHAPTER XXIV

NOVEMBER 21ST, 1718

Madam Rolleston and Tudor had come to Williamsburg, and Joyce had been clasped in her mother's and brother's arms. Madam's hair was as white as snow, and her little daughter hung round her with an exquisite tenderness because of it.

Madam had brought Mammy with her, and the black woman hurtled away his Excellency's housekeeper, with her drops and hartshorn and Hungary waters, and out of her own strange knowledge, applied medicines to the wounded shoulder that acted on it like a charm.

Half the world had ridden to Williamsburg to felicitate Miss Rolleston on her escape. Madam Carter had brought Susie, and Brother Joseph his sister Molly. Mr. Jacques Fontaine came too. He had made one of a rescue party that had gone out after Joyce, and when he returned home after a fruitless search and heard what had happened, he never drew rein until he had reached Williamsburg and offered her his hand in marriage. Joyce refused him in a way that left them friends. Half an hour afterwards Brother Joseph also paid his addresses,

prefacing his proposal with the observation that he trusted that the sufferings Miss Rolleston had undergone would correct a tendency to self-will in her deportment, which had deterred him from prosecuting his suit before. That Miss Rolleston was still unregenerate may be gathered from the fact that Brother Joseph afterwards remarked to his sister Molly that it was a pity Joyce had been allowed such a free intimacy with a rude boy like Bob Carter, whose manners were evidently catching.

"La! Joyce," said Susie Carter, "I should not be averse to being carried off by the Indians myself, if I could be as courted afterwards as you. Why, all the beaux are mad about you. There are none left for any other maid. I doubt me I shall have to fall back on Tudor here."

The overture, if overture it could be called, might easily have been couched in more flattering terms. But Miss Carter's tip-tilted nose and sparkling black eyes were provocative, and Tudor found himself thinking that if she would cultivate a more decorous manner towards himself she would be distinctly engaging. Later on he told her so.

"And now, my dearest Joyce," said Miss Ball in her sensible way, "you must try to forget the truly shocking experience you have had."

"Forget it! Oh, Molly! 'Tis the last thing I ever want to do!" said Joyce, and hid a hot face on her friend's neck.

"But this is foolishness, my love!" said Miss Ball, though she held Joyce closely.

The two sloops of Captain Maynard's expedition had set out on the 18th of November from the James River. It was on the 21st that their attack on Blackbeard was made. In the interval Anthony and the gallant Lieutenant had begun a friendship that was to last them through life.

The appearance of the two sloops came upon Blackbeard himself as a great surprise. He was astonished that he had received no warning. For outlaw as he was, he had friends in high places—the evil-minded did indeed whisper the names of such dignitaries as Governor Eden of North Carolina, and Mr. Tobias Knight, secretary of the province, in this connection—who made it their business to keep him acquainted with all the knavish schemes of his enemies. As a matter of fact it had been impossible to get word conveyed to him since Lieutenant Maynard had adopted the simple expedient of stopping all boats and vessels from going up the river.

At first the pirate chief did not think the Lieutenant would dare to fight him, as the sloops had no guns, while his own mounted several. For the strength of his position had always lain in the fact that while he knew the creeks and shoals with which the coast abounded better than any man living, their existence made it impossible for any vessel of force to approach him. But when Maynard

hoisted the King's colours, and began to steer straight towards him, he saw that stern business was intended.

"What think you of the prince of pirates?" asked the Lieutenant of Anthony, as Blackbeard leant over the gunwale of his vessel, watching them.

"He is scarce a beauty," answered Anthony.

In truth the terror of Virginia was a ferocious figure. His great black beard hung to his waist. His great Ramilles wig was black too. He had stuck lighted matches under his hat, which lit up his wild and wicked eyes. Three braces of pistols were slung over his shoulders.

"Who are ye?" he cried, when they were within hailing distance.

"You may see by our colours we are no pirates," came back the answer to him from the sloops.

Blackbeard tauntingly bade them send a boat on board in order that he might see who they were.

"I can't spare my boat, but I will come aboard of you as soon as I can, with my sloop," Lieutenant Maynard sang back obligingly.

Blackbeard poured himself a glass of neat liquor, and flourishing it, drank to his enemies. Then with many oaths he swore that he would neither give them quarter nor take any from them.

Knowing the coast as thoroughly as he did, Blackbeard was for a long time able to

maintain a running fight. But the liquor in which he had indulged may have muddled his brain, for, with all his boasted knowledge of the intricacies of the creeks and shoals, a sharp shock told him that his vessel was aground. Lieutenant Maynard's sloops were every minute coming nearer.

"Sam!" called Blackbeard, and took the negro down into the powder-hold.

Sam had once been the gayest and best-tempered fellow on the Rappahannoc. Even the impudence to his master which had earned him his cruel whipping had been due, more or less, to a spirit of irrepressible fun. But he was gay and good-tempered no longer. He had been hounded till he was almost as savage as the desperadoes with whom he had cast in his lot.

"Would you liefer be blown up or whipped to death, Sam?" asked the pirate.

"I ruther be blow up, massa," answered Sam sullenly.

Blackbeard took a match. It was a slow-burning one, calculated to last a long time. He lighted it and put it into Sam's hand.

"There'll be an end on the fight, one way or other, long afore that match is out," he said. "If the villains win, you need have no expectation of mercy from them. If I'm not down to take it from you before it burns out 'twill be because I'm dead as a herring. So drop it into the powder magazine, Sam, and have a short death, and a merry one, and take your enemies along with you."

"Yes, massa," said Sam, ferociously, and stood over against the magazine with the match in his hand.

Reaching deck again Blackbeard gave an order for the guns to be fired. The first broadside did terrible execution. Many of Maynard's force fell to rise no more and shrieks from the wounded came from all sides. Anthony was knocked down by a flying shell but was able to pick himself up again, more stunned than hurt. The second sloop was completely disabled.

The Lieutenant gave orders that the survivors were to conceal themselves between decks. Then taking the helm he steered the sloop right on to Blackbeard.

Seeing the deck as bare as his hand, Blackbeard leapt to the rash conclusion that the day was his own.

"The villains have all been knocked on the head save three or four," he cried, triumphantly. "We will jump on board and cut them to pieces."

At the moment when the sloop grounded into him he threw upon her deck a number of hand grenadoes. For some reason or other these failed to go off, a thick cloud of smoke being the only result.

"On guard!" cried Anthony from the top of the hatchway to the Lieutenant. And only just in time. In the thick smoke Blackbeard and his men had leapt over the bows and were upon them. In an instant Blackbeard and Maynard were engaged in a hand-to-

hand conflict, while leaping up from the hatches Anthony and the men threw themselves upon the rest of the enemy. Each side had swords and pistols and cutlasses, and fought with whatever came handiest.

Maynard and Blackbeard were about equally matched and neither had received a wound. Then, all at once, Maynard's sword broke off short in his hand. Blackbeard, with a fiendish laugh, was about to run him through when the thrust was parried by a sword from behind, and another sword—a sword of fine Toledo steel—was pressed into Maynard's hand, while its owner turned away to fight with his pistols. Blackbeard was Maynard's quarry.

Cut and slashed and hacked, Blackbeard still fought on as though he were the demon the Virginians sometimes considered him. There was a terrible wound on his neck, and another in his shoulder. Shot was literally poured into him. But he had no mind to fall into the hands of his enemies. This spoiler of the earth, this murderer of women and children, would have had small mercy shown him from the people whose terror he had been for so many years. He died still fighting, and literally from loss of blood.

As he fell, such of his followers as remained threw themselves into the sea.

"Quarter! Quarter!" they pleaded, and Maynard granted it them, though, as he knew, it was only deferring their end for a few days.

The fight was over. Maynard was the

master of Blackbeard's sloop, while Blackbeard's head hung at the bowsprit.

"My thanks to you, Mr. Shipley," said the Lieutenant in a man's brief way, as he handed Anthony back the sword that had saved his life.

At that instant the boatswain came yelling up to them like a maniac. And through all the grime and powder on it, you could see the whiteness of his face.

"There's a negro standing with a lighted match over against the powder magazine," he shouted.

There were cries of horror from all sides.

"Loose the two ships from each other," ordered the Lieutenant, and the men flew to execute the order. But the ships were too tightly jammed together. They could not move them.

"Lead the way to the powder hold," said Maynard, and the boatswain, though he was a brave man and had fought splendidly all through, did so jibberingly. This was death in so horrible a form.

The powder-hold was dimly lighted. But the match poised in Sam's hands showed them all that was necessary to confirm their worst fears.

"Put that match down sirrah," the Lieutenant ordered sternly. "Blackbeard is dead."

"Dat what we all gwine be, jes' befo' dis yer match is froo!" was the blood-curdling reply, while Sam's eyes rolled horribly.

"If you get you gone from that magazine you shall have a free pardon," the Lieutenant told him, desperately.

"Arter I done been whipped to death or befo', massa?" enquired Sam, with savage humour.

The Lieutenant took a step forward. Sam lowered the match till it was only a couple of inches from the magazine.

"If massa gwine come one step funder I sholy gwine fro' it in," he warned, and the Lieutenant stopped dead, looking at the match, which every minute was getting nearer to its end, with apprehensive eyes.

"May I essay what I can do, sir?" asked Anthony and stepped forward.

"That you, Sam?" he said cheerfully.

The light, casual tone made Sam stare at him. In some odd way it seemed to introduce a more normal atmosphere into that tragic place. It made Lieutenant Maynard for the first time think that perhaps, after all, Sam wouldn't fulfil his threat. It made Sam himself involuntarily raise the match a little higher from the powder.

Its light fell on Anthony's face, and Sam gave a smothered ejaculation. "I know yo', young massa," he said. "Cynthia done useter tell me bouten yo' de time I creep to her cabin outen de swamp. She done say dat chile dar sets a heap o' sto' by yo'."

"Well, he won't get much satisfaction out of me if I'm in bits, will he?" asked Anthony reasonably.

Will it be believed that, in spite of his deplorable position and the appalling situation, a grin widened Sam's mouth? He looked hard into the blue eyes regarding him so steadily, his own eyes growing saner every moment. "Dat sholy am de case, sah," he agreed. "But Cynthia done say yo' tuk holt ob dat chile's lil' hand all fro' de night, when he was mos' dyin'. An' case ob dat yo' des not gwine be in bits, massa!"

He held the flickering match a second longer, and then dropping it on the floor of the hold, stamped it out with his foot.

"You offered this man a free pardon, sir," said Anthony. "I claim the fulfilment of your promise."

"As far as the power lies with me I will keep my word, Mr. Shipley," the Lieutenant told him. "But he must remain on the sloop and be taken before the Governor along with the rest of his companions in crime."

"In that case, Sam, you'd best stick to me as close as sealing wax," Anthony advised. "'Tis not everyone who possesses Blackbeard's sense of humour, and holding lighted matches over powder magazines is a game scarce calculated to endear you to the crew."

Sam took his advice, and during the homeward voyage kept at his protector's heels. The precaution was not unnecessary. As Anthony had said, the forms of playfulness initiated by Blackbeard were of a kind to be resented by British seamen.

A boat had been sent on ahead to bring

the good news to Williamsburg. The whole of Virginia was out to welcome the brave Lieutenant and his crew. And sailing up the river with Blackbeard's head at the bowsprit, while roaring crowds on the bank shouted a welcome, there came out to Anthony once again, as it had come out to him before ever his feet had touched Virginian soil, the warm, friendly fragrance of the pines.

A ship was anchored in James River that had not been there when they left. It was *The Sally*, Captain Ticklefoot, master. It had come sailing across the ocean at the best speed Captain Ticklefoot could make, and it had brought a passenger, a gentleman in superfine broadcloth, a bald head and a smooth, pink face. His name was Porson, and he looked like a highly-respectable family lawyer, which indeed he was.

The Governor had come down to meet the sloops. He thanked Lieutenant Maynard and his crew in the name of all Virginia for the service they had rendered her, and hats and caps were waved and wild huzzahs were shouted. And Lieutenant Maynard said that while all his crew had behaved admirably, he could not forbear from mentioning the conspicuous gallantry of Mr. Shipley, to whom he and all the ship's company owed their lives.

Mr. Shipley was occupied with his horse and his dogs, which had been brought down to meet him, and whose frantic demonstrations of welcome he was obliged to check. But he looked as pleased as any other boy would

have been at the smile his Excellency gave him. Then, all at once, he saw that people were looking at him curiously and the Governor said,

"Mr. Porson, you may tell the news you have come over the seas to bring."

Mr. Porson came forward, bowing very low to Anthony. "Your kinsman the Earl of Forres died three months since," he said. "His father, the Duke, followed him to the grave scarce a month afterwards. Allow me to be the first to congratulate your Grace on your accession to the title."

Little pleasure the news brought to the new Duke, to judge by his face. Mr. Porson thought that he could not have understood.

"Your Grace is now Duke of Whitby, Earl of Forres, Lichfield and Cærsus, Baron Ashburton, Falkland and Bellamont, and Custos Rotulorum of Yorkshire. Your Grace has a fair inheritance."

"And I have also a young kinsman to mourn who was very dear to me," the young Duke reminded him, with a touch of sternness. Then he laid a hand on Nero's head and found a comrade who could understand.

"You will be glad to know that the late Duke relented to you after the death of his son," said the Governor kindly. "He had your case represented more fairly to his Majesty, who has been graciously pleased to grant you a free pardon in the confident hope that such clemency will ensure your steady loyalty for the future. 'Tis a twice-won pardon," he

said, and his voice sounded as though he were proud of Anthony, "since to-day, as I confidently expected, you have returned bearing your sheaves with you."

"Your Excellency's many kindnesses to me will remain a lasting memory in my life," said Anthony, and from blue eyes to dark eyes friend looked to friend.

"I doubt your Grace has but scurvy recollections of your voyage on board the *Sally*," observed Captain Ticklefoot, a sheepish look on his honest face.

"Nay, the subduing discipline of the *Sally* was no bad preparation for my further entertainment," Anthony told him, with a tinge of mockery in his voice that made more people than Captain Ticklefoot wince. "But I have certain benefits to remember at your hands, Captain," he added more graciously, and Captain Ticklefoot withdrew not wholly dissatisfied with his reception.

Tudor came up shyly. He had heard Anthony's last speech and had taken it to himself. "Does your Grace care to claim kinship with me?" he asked diffidently.

"I claimed it on the day I invited you to dine with me—off your own woodcock—in the swamp. We will let our memories of each other date from then, cousin," said Anthony, and gave Tudor's hand a kinsman's clasp.

On the outskirts of the crowd he caught sight of a burly figure. "Mr. Slaughter!" he called, and the overseer came up to him.

"I hear you are out of office, Mr. Slaughter,

and on my account," he said. "Will you be my steward? I am now—what was the list, Mr. Porson?"

"Duke of Whitby, Earl of Forres, Lichfield, and Caersus, Baron Ashburton, Falkland and Bellamont, and Custos Rotulorum of Yorkshire," said Mr. Porson, as though he loved to roll the titles out.

"As steward to all that, Mr. Slaughter, you will not have to draw your belt so monstrous tight," observed the new Duke.

"You always did sass, lad—your Grace, I mean," said Mr. Slaughter in his old way.

"Will you accept the post, Mr. Slaughter?" asked Anthony.

"I don't mind if I do," answered Mr. Slaughter, imperturbably.

Mr. Porson looked at him in horror. "You cannot surely know what the Duke is offering you," he whispered. "'Tis a post worth many thousands a year, for which he will be solicited in the most lively terms when he returns home. Ask his Grace's leave to tell him how infinitely obliged to him you are."

But Mr. Slaughter did nothing of the kind. "His Grace and I understand each other—always did," he said, and moved back to his place in the crowd.

There was another face in the crowd—a face that was tragic in its misery. His Grace of Whitby, whose eyes of sapphire blue seemed singularly keen, called him up. And when Nat had slunk up to him he stood him at his

side and turned to the Governor. "Your Excellency was good enough to say that mine was a twice won pardon," he said. "I have here a fellow—convict—from whom I have received many obligations. Would it be possible for me to transfer one of my pardons to him?"

"The matter might perhaps be arranged later on," said his Excellency, smiling. "Your Grace is now a person of much consequence, and doubtless, at home, will have great influence."

But Nat still looked tragic. "It ain't a ha'porth o' use to me bein' free, if so be as I can't be with you," he said. "An' now you're loaded up with all them titles you'll never be able to have a servant wot's got a 'and like mine," and Nat looked at it with loathing.

"You always were an idiot, Nat," said his Grace of Whitby, impartially. But a master's hand has seldom fallen on a servant's shoulder with such affection as did his on Nat's, and when the boy would have crept humbly away, he kept him beside him.

A little weazened individual whom the reader has seen before pressed obsequiously forward. It was Mr. Jeremiah Nepho. In the light of present events he would have given much to undo the past. Still, the Duke appeared to be in a gracious frame of mind and he was minded to share in the clemency and benefits he was extending to the others. As a factor to the Duke of

Whitby Mr. Nepho's fortune would be made.

"Your Grace may perchance remember me?" he observed, bowing until his head almost scraped Anthony's foot.

"Prodigiously well, Mr. Nepho," his Grace assured him, and there was certainly nothing in the words to make Nero and Hellion growl in the way they did.

"Had I but known who was being consigned to me, your Grace's sacred person would have received very different usage at my hands," continued the merchant, eyeing the growling dogs fearfully.

His Grace looked down at that part of his sacred person—namely, his wrist—which was still faintly ornamented with the scar from Mr. Nepho's cord. "That I can well credit, Mr. Nepho," he made answer suavely. "But if I mind me rightly I am still your debtor to the extent of a silver-topped cane. My servant here will wait upon you with one to replace it, should you care to press your claim."

"And enj'y the job!" added the bullet-headed person on whose shoulder the Duke's hand rested.

But more than the growling of the dogs, and far more than the truculence of the bullet-headed one, did Mr. Nepho fear the blue fires of Anthony's eyes. "I pray your Grace not to give yourself any trouble in the matter," he muttered hurriedly, and scuttled off with undignified haste into the crowd, where he was glad to efface himself.

Anthony let him go as a thing of naught, without even troubling himself to watch his hurried retreat. But when he turned to his Excellency again there was real eagerness in his voice.

"Since we are on the question of pardons, your Excellency," he said, "Lieutenant Maynard promised a pardon to a negro who fought on Blackbeard's ship. It would make me even more your debtor than I am, if you would substantiate this."

"Virginia owes too much to Lieutenant Maynard not to stand by him in all his conduct of to-day's affairs. The negro is pardoned," said his Excellency.

"Perhaps his master"—the young Duke turned to Mr. Fauce who was standing near, with a grave dignity—"will permit me to purchase him?"

It was not so noticeable as usual that Mr. Fauce's eyes were too near together as he said, "I cannot ask your Grace to receive him after what has passed between us, but if I durst make the offer, I would."

"I accept him, sir, and I thank you," said the Duke of Whitby, and Mr. Fauce bowed low.

Anthony motioned to the sailor who was guarding the negro to bring him up.

"Sam, I give you your freedom," he said, "and in exchange for your shelter I offer you a home in England. Have I a spare lodge among my other possessions, Mr. Porson?"

Mr. Porson laughed hilariously. The Duke had deigned to make a joke! "*Has your Grace a lodge?*" he repeated; "why, you've lodges to Whitby Castle and your own Whitby Court, and Forres Manor and Lichfield Hall and——"

"You will have a choice of dwellings, you see, Sam," interrupted Sam's new master, "if you will follow me across the seas, and if I can persuade Madam Rolleston to let me purchase Cynthia and the Brown Rogue."

Would Sam follow the Duke of Whitby under those conditions? He was sobbing at his feet. Anthony looked questionably at Madam Rolleston.

"Nay, sir, would you take the whole of my plantation with you?" said Madam, sadly. She stood up, and the chiselled face under the white hair was strangely moved as she looked at the head of her house. "What reparation can I make for my harsh usage of you, sir?" she asked.

"If you will give me the gift I shall ask of you, Madam, there can be no question of reparation between us," said Anthony.

He flung Young Fire's bridle to Nat, and before all the gentlemen and ladies of Virginia there assembled, Whitby's Duke walked up to the quiet little girl standing by her mother's side. He knelt on one knee before her. He took her hand.

"Madam," he said, "will you be my Duchess?"

And the proud eyes had softened, and the

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hard mouth had smiled, and the face had become a face of dreams.

"Sir," said little Joyce, "since from all the world you choose out me, I will be your wife."

THE END

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